Nuptial Symbolism in Second Temple Writings, the New Testament and Rabbinic Literature

Divine Marriage at Key Moments of Salvation History

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André Villeneuve

BRILL

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Divine Marriage at Key Moments of Salvation History

By

André Villeneuve

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Abbreviations

AB	Anchor Bible
ABD	Anchor Bible Dictionary
ACW	Ancient Christian Writers
AnBib	Analecta Biblica
AOAT	Alter Orient und Altes Testament
AUSS	Andrews University Seminary Studies
BHTh	Beiträge zur Historischen Theologie
BJS	Brown Judaic Studies
BLS	Bible and Literature Series
BVC	Bible et Vie Chrétienne
BS	Bibliotheca Sacra
BZAW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
CBC	The Cambridge Biblical Commentary
CBQ	Catholic Biblical Quarterly
CRB	Cahiers de la Revue Biblique
DNTB	Dictionary of New Testament Background (ed. Evans and Porter)
EDB	Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible (ed. Freedman)
EI	Eretz Israel
ETL	Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses
FC	The Fathers of the Church
GAP	Guides to the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha
GTJ	Grace Theological Journal
HTNC	Harper's New Testament Commentaries
HTR	Harvard Theological Review
ICC	International Critical Commentary
IDB	Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible (ed. Buttrick/Crim)
ISBE	International Standard Bible Encyclopedia
JAAR	Journal of the American Academy of Religion
JBL	Journal of Biblical Literature
JES	Journal of Ecumenical Studies
JJS	Journal of Jewish Studies
JNES	Journal of Near Eastern Studies
JNSL	Journal of Northwest Semitic Languages
JQR	Jewish Quarterly Review
JR	Journal of Religion
JSJ	Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic and Roman Period
JSNT	Journal for the Study of the New Testament

JSOT	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament
JSP	Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha
JSQ	Jewish Studies Quarterly
JTS	Journal of Theological Studies
LA	Liber Annuus (Annual of the Studium Biblicum Franciscanum Jerusalem)
LD	Lectio Divina
LNTS	Library of New Testament Studies
LS	Letter & Spirit
NCBC	The New Century Bible Commentary
NICNT	New International Commentary on the New Testament
NICOT	New International Commentary on the Old Testament
NJBC	New Jerome Biblical Commentary
NRT	Nouvelle Revue Théologique
NT	Novum Testamentum
NTS	New Testament Studies
OBO	Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis
OTL	Old Testament Library
OTP	Old Testament Pseudepigrapha (ed. Charlesworth)
RB	Revue Biblique
RHPR	Revue d'Histoire et de Philosophie Religieuses
RSR	Recherches de Science Religieuse
RTh	Revue Thomiste
RTL	Revue Théologique de Louvain
SBFA	Studii Biblici Franciscani Analecta
SBL	Studies in Biblical Literature
SBLDS	Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series
SBS	Stuttgarter Bibelstudien
SBT	Studies in Biblical Theology
SBTS	Sources for Biblical and Theological Study
SH	Scripta Hierosolymitana
Scr	Scriptura
SJOT	Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament
SJT	Scottish Journal of Theology
SP	Sacra Pagina Series
SVTP	Studia in Veteris Testamenti Pseudepigrapha
TDNT	Theological Dictionary of the New Testament
VC	Vigiliae Christianae
VT	Vetus Testamentum
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
ZAW	Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

1.1 Thesis: The Marriage between God and His People

The covenantal love relationship between God and His people is an important recurring motif in both the Jewish Scriptures and the New Testament that has inspired Jews and Christians in their respective reading of the Bible throughout the ages: God has redeemed his people out of love for them, and he calls them to love him in return.[1] And so at the heart of the Hebrew Bible and of the religion of Israel stands the great exhortation of the *Shema*: "you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might."[2] This is not a light matter of mere sentimentality: According to the Deuteronomistic school, Israel's response to the divine covenant is a question of life and death: Faithfulness results in abundant blessings, and unfaithfulness or unbelief lead to curse and calamity (cf. Deut 30:15–20). This exclusive covenantal union of love between God and His people is often vividly portrayed in the Scriptures through the metaphor of a tender, loving and permanent marriage bond between husband and wife.

The image grew out of the fertile soil of the many myths of the ancient world involving either sexual unions between deities or divine-human marriages. One thinks, for example, of the union between the male deity Apsu and the sea-goddess Tiamat in the Babylonian epic *Enuma Elish*, the cults of sacred prostitution surrounding the goddess of fertility Ishtar and her love affair with the god Tammuz, the Ugaritic myth of Baal and Anat, and the Canaanite romance between the sky-god El and his consort Ashera. Later, the Greek world was well acquainted with the concept of the *hieros gamos* enacted between gods such as Zeus and Demeter, or Dionysus and Aphrodite, and these stories were enthusiastically adopted by the Romans.

Yet despite the proliferation of cultic *eros* in the ancient world, the biblical tradition stands out as rather unique in its model of a deity choosing to enter

1 Cf. Exod 20:6; Deut 5:10; 7:7–13; 10:12–15; 11:1, 13, 22; 19:9; 30:6, 16, 20; Josh 22:5; 23:11; Isa 56:6; 63:9; Jer 31:3; Ezek 16:8; Hos 14:4; Dan 9:4; Neh 1:5; Ps 5:11; 26:8; 31:23; 69:36; 116:1.

2 Deut 6:5. On the reciprocal love between God and Israel and the sacrificial demands implied in the *Shema* according to early Jewish tradition, see Fishbane, *The Kiss of God*, 3–13.

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into an exclusive and faithful marriage with an entire *people*.[3] For OT prophets such as Hosea, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and deutero-Isaiah, God is Israel's husband and Israel is God's bride. This love is a trying one for the Bridegroom: Israel's love is fickle, and she is often guilty of unfaithfulness which leads to her own debased humiliation. Yet the divine Husband, in His steadfast and persevering love, patiently awaits her repentance and return so that He may restore her to Himself, the source of all divine blessings. No less unique, then, in the ANE context is the fact that the marriage between YHWH and Israel always remains strictly *monogamous*: despite the bride's infidelities there is never any thought on the part of the bridegroom to find Himself another wife, quite in contrast to the norm in surrounding cultures where polygamy was a common occurrence.[4] The prophets also frequently personify Israel (or Jerusalem) as the *daughter of Zion*, a female allegorical figure portrayed as either a virgin or a mother with child.[5] Later, in Wisdom literature, the nuptial metaphor takes on another form, introducing the mediating figure of Lady Wisdom who seductively courts men and invites them to follow her and be united with her. In the New Testament, the declaration of God's love for His people is reaffirmed and reenacted through the life, teachings, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. In many NT passages, Christ takes on the role of the divine bridegroom, the Church assumes Israel's role as bride, and the attendant great commandment to obediently love him in return is upheld and even intensified.[6] Though at times it seems that the Church fares little better than Israel in remaining faithful to her bridegroom,

3 Cohen, "The Song of Songs and the Jewish Religious Mentality," 6; Galambush, *Jerusalem in the Book of Ezekiel*, 25–27.

4 And as reflected, for example, in the life of Israel's patriarchs. The only exceptions are found in Jer 4:6–12 (where God is married to the two sisters Israel and Judah) and Ezekiel 23 (where He is married to the equivalent Oholah/Samaria and Oholibah/Jerusalem) – but the two sisters nevertheless represent the divided state of one nation.

5 Israel as *daughter of Jerusalem*/*Zion* appears in 2 Kgs 19:21; Ps 9:14; Isa 1:8; 10:32; 16:11; 37:22; 52:2; 62:11; Jer 4:31; 6:2, 23; 8:19; 18:13; 31:3–4, 21; Lam 1:6, 15; 2:1, 4, 8, 10, 13, 15, 18; 4:22; Amos 5:2; Mic 1:13; 4:8, 10, 13; Zeph 3:14; Zech 2:10; 9:9.

6 For a selection of declarations of God's or Christ's love for His people and exhortations to the Christian community to love God in return in the NT, see Matt 22:37; Mark 10:21; 12:31–33; Luke 7:47; 10:27; John 3:16; 11:5; 13:1; 13:34; 14:15, 21, 23; 15:9–10; 16:27; 17:23–26; 21:15–17; Rom 5:5, 8; 8:28, 35–39; 1 Cor 2:9; 13; 16:14; 2 Cor 13:11, 14; Gal 2:20; Eph 1:4; 2:4; 3:17–19; 5:2, 25; Col 1:13; 3:14; 2 Thess 2:16; 1 Tim 1:14; Titus 3:4; Jas 1:12; 2:5; 1 John 3:1; 4:7–12, 16, 18–19; 5:1–3; 2 John 1:6; Jude 1:21. The commandment to love God/Christ can be said to be "intensified" in the NT because of the imperative to love sacrificially as Christ loved the Church, that is to say by being willing to lay down his life for her. E.g. John 15:12–13; 21:17–18; 1 Cor 13; Gal 2:20; Eph 5:2, 25; Phil 2:1–8.

she is nevertheless promised a glorious eschatological wedding feast with him at the end of times.

But what does the nuptial imagery in early Jewish and Christian texts really intend to portray in its deepest essence? Is it a mere metaphor, an allegorical way of illustrating God's love for His people, or does it attempt to describe a substantial, mystical and metaphysical union between the human and the divine? Evidence points to the fact that at least in some circles, from the time of the Second Temple on, the nuptial imagery signified what Eugene Seaich has called an act of "*spiritual fusion*" between God and man, and a "transfusion of divine energy into the world" whereby the Bridegroom, by uniting himself to humanity, raised it to the heaven from which He came.[7] From Wisdom literature to Pauline and rabbinic writings, one sees a recurring pattern whereby the Redeemer unites himself to the unholy in order to make it holy. In so doing, the nuptial texts often portray this union as occurring at four distinct stages of history: first, they recall a primeval, idyllic "nuptial" state that was subsequently lost; second, it was regained by a single momentous redemptive event depicted as "marriage." Third, this nuptial redemptive event is extended into time through liturgical worship, recalling and reenacting the redemptive marriage into the lives of subsequent generations. Fourth, the liturgical worship anticipates a final, eschatological fulfillment of the divine-human marriage at the end of history.

The aim of the present work is to study the nuptial symbolism in Second Temple writings, the New Testament, and rabbinic literature.[8] It proposes to examine the early Jewish and Christian theology of the marriage between God and His people, understood as a nuptial covenant dynamically moving through salvation history. More specifically, I wish to investigate the connections between the nuptial metaphor in early Judaism and four "key moments" of Israel's biblical history that correspond to the dimensions outlined above:

1. Creation and the Garden of Eden
2. The Exodus and Mount Sinai
3. The Jerusalem Temple on Mount Zion
4. The eschatological end of times

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7 Cf. Chavasse, *The Bride of Christ*, 14, 17; Seaich, *A Great Mystery*, 1–2.

8 This study is an expansion of my MA thesis: "Mystical Marriage and Temple Imagery in the New Testament – A Case of Mystagogy in Scripture," under the direction of Dr. Serge Ruzer and Prof. Justin Taylor, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, May 2008.

I then wish to consider how these connections shed light upon the understanding of the marriage between Christ and the Church as described in the NT nuptial texts. In this first chapter, I will begin by surveying the biblical background of our topic, that is, nuptial symbolism in the OT and in wisdom literature. This will prepare the ground to formulate in greater detail the aims of the present study, its general outline, and its methodological considerations.

1.2 Background (A): Nuptial Symbolism in the OT Prophets

The nuptial metaphor and representation of Israel as God's spouse is already a prominent feature in four OT prophetic books – Hosea, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Isaiah – who borrowed the metaphor from their neighbors of the Ancient Near East and adapted it to the worship of YHWH.[9] The metaphor is rarely complimentary towards Israel, portraying her frequent infidelities as adultery and prostitution.[10] Nevertheless, in most cases the marriage is directed towards a future restoration, with the hope of returning to a condition of pristine perfection.[11] As we survey the nuptial metaphor in these four prophetic books, we will pay particular attention to its historical dimension and how the authors depict the marriage between God and Israel as playing itself out in the history of the nation and of mankind.

---

9 Cf. Stauffer, "γαμέω, γάμος," TDNT 1 (1964), 653; Baumann, "Liebe und Gewalt," 76–90.

10 In sources as diverse as the Pentateuch, the psalms, and Chronicles, the nation's going astray after other gods is expressed as "whoring" after them, often in the context of cultic sacrifice. Cf. Exod 34:14–16: וְזָנוּ אַחֲרֵי אֱלֹהֵיהֶם; Lev 17:7; 20:5–6; Deut 31:16; Ps 73:27; 106:38–39; 1 Chr 5:25; 2 Chr 21:11, 13. On the marriage metaphor and use of זנה in the extraprophetic biblical texts, cf. Cohen, "The Song of Songs and the Jewish Religious Mentality," 6–8; Galambush, *Jerusalem in the Book of Ezekiel*, 27–35.

11 Neher ("Le symbolisme conjugal: expression de l'histoire dans l'Ancien Testament.") points out how the conjugal symbolism of the prophets is an expression of Israel's history from its mythical origins to the eschatological end (p. 34), where every stage in the marriage between God and Israel corresponds to a period of Israel's history. Thus Hosea describes the major stages in their romance: birth (יוֹם הִוָּלְדָהּ, 2:3), youth (יְמֵי נְעוּרֶיהָ, 2:15), marriage (וְאֵרַשְׂתִּיךְ לִי, 2:19–20), and the conjugal embrace (וְיָדַעַתְּ, 2:20). Ezekiel highlights the following moments: birth (יוֹם הוּלֶּדֶת, 16:4), puberty (שְׁדַיִם נָכֹנוּ, 16:7), betrothal (עֵת דֹּדִים, 16:8), marriage (וַתִּהְיִי לִי, 16:8), infidelity and prostitution (16:15–35, key term: זוֹנָה), punishment and death (16:40). Ben Zvi ("The Marital Metphor of YHWH and Israel," 367–69) notes that this relationship between husband and wife is not a one time event but involves the creation of a narrative going from an initial and ideal period of 'first love' through a period of crisis caused by the wife's sin, oriented toward the hope of a future reconciliation between husband and wife. Cf. also Abma, *Bonds of Love*, 255.

1.2.1 *Hosea 1–3*

The earliest biblical example of the nuptial metaphor goes back to the mid-eighth century BCE, shortly before the fall of the northern kingdom of Israel, when the prophet Hosea is divinely summoned to take a "wife of harlotry" (אֵשֶׁת זְנוּנִים) and "children of harlotry" as a symbol of the land and people who have "committed great harlotry [by departing] from the LORD" (Hos 1:2; cf. 9:1).[12] Hosea's unhappy love for Gomer, who is "loved by a lover and committing adultery" (אֲהֻבַת רֵעַ וּמְנָאָפֶת) (Hos 3:1), reflects the frustrated love of the Lord for the children of Israel on account of their idolatry and love for other gods. While the nuptial elements in chapters 1 and 3 especially focus on Hosea's own troubled marriage, chapter 2 develops the nuptial metaphor as applied to YHWH and Israel. Hosea is the first to employ the terms "husband" (אִישׁ) and "wife" (אִשָּׁה) to designate the relationship between them (Hos 2:2). The chapter can be divided into two contrasting parts: the first (2:2–13) is a description of Israel's misdeeds and a severe castigation of her unfaithfulness and betrayal, while the second part (2:14–23) describes her future restoration and rehabilitation. Verse 2 appears to be a repudiation of the adulterous wife by her angry Husband because of her harlotries and adulteries ("she is not my wife, nor am I her Husband!"), but the continued *rîv* and promise of restoration that follows show that this is not an irreconcilable divorce. Nevertheless, the punishment for Israel's infidelities is a humiliating public display of her nudity, turning her like an arid desert that is meant to recall "the day she was born" (Hos 2:3). The association of the day of Israel's "birth" with the desert alludes to the wanderings at the time of the Exodus, a connection that is elsewhere made explicit (cf. Hos 2:15; 11:1; 13:4–6) and is reinforced by the recurring covenantal language of Hosea alluding to the Sinai covenant or its transgression: Israel selfishly hopes to find material abundance in the pursuit of her lovers (2:5), oblivious to the fact that all her grain, new wine and oil, wool and linen were given to her by YHWH as a sign of His covenant faithfulness.[13] The divine Husband's reaction is to impede her paths so that she will no longer be able to find her lovers

12 On Hosea's nuptial symbolism, cf. Fensham, "The Marriage Metaphor in Hosea"; Abma, *Bonds of Love*, 110–213; Baumann, *Liebe und Gewalt*, 91–110; Moughtin-Mumby, *Sexual and Marital Metaphors*, 206–268; Levenson, *Sinai and Zion*, 75–80.

13 The covenantal allusions are seen in the use of three words דגן, תירוש, and יצהר, "grain, wine, and oil" (2:8, 22) which occur in Deut 7:13; 11:14; 12:17; 14:23; 18:4; and 28:51 as a synecdoche for the full range of agricultural blessings given by YHWH. Cf. Stuart, *Hosea-Jonah* (WBC), 50. For other examples of Hosea's use of covenantal language, cf. 2:18; 6:7; 8:1; 10:4; 12:1, and Mays, *Hosea*, 7–8. Fensham ("The Marriage Metaphor in Hosea," 76–77) adds: "The covenant of Sinai forms the important background of the prophetic pronouncements in Hos 1:2–9."

(2:6–7) and will be constrained to return to Him – even if this repentance is not motivated by true love but merely because she realizes that her former condition with her "first husband" was better than her idolatry. In addition to taking back the good produce He had given her, God causes all her mirth to cease, bringing an end to her Sabbaths and festivals (2:11), and destroying her vines and fig trees (v. 12) because of her forgetting Him (v. 13) – a forgetfulness that signifies the ultimate end and death of love. Israel's marital betrayal is representative of a thriving Baal fertility cult which includes wine and oil libations, grain, silver and gold offerings and the burning of incense to the foreign divinities (Hos 2:5, 8, 13). This illicit cult competes with the Temple worship of YHWH that is hinted at in our text with the mention of Israel's "feast days, her New Moons, her Sabbaths – all her appointed feasts" (2:11). The cultic and sacrificial aspects of Israel's harlotry/idolatry and its absolute incompatibility with the worship of YHWH become particularly evident in chapter 4 (vv. 10–19), where Israel's "harlotry" and "adultery" are manifest in their offering sacrifices on the mountaintops, and burning incense on the hills (4:13).

The purpose of this divine castigation is not divorce, however, but rather correction and restoration. In stark contrast to the preceding verses, the second part of chapter 2 (vv. 14–23) is a message of mercy and hope which foresees a future restoration of the broken marriage. This restoration will begin in the wilderness, the place of the first love, again recalling the time of the Exodus (Hos 2:14–15). It also displays a clear eschatological orientation with the sustained use of the future tense and the repetition of the expression "on that day" (בַּיּוֹם־הַהוּא).[14] On that day, not YHWH but rather the Baals will be forgotten. This future reality is expressed with a pun indicating the definitive end of Baal worship: "you will call me 'My Husband' (אִישִׁי) and no longer call me 'My Master' (בַּעְלִי)" (2:16). The language of covenant continues to be used, now depicting Israel's rehabilitation in the eyes of her divine husband: "And I will make for you a covenant on that day with the beasts of the field, the birds of the air, and the creeping things of the ground" (Hos 2:18). This terminology recalls the language of creation and the Garden of Eden (cf. Gen 1:28; 2:19–20). Thus Hosea's idea of the nuptial covenant between God and Israel apparently reveals a double point of reference: proximately, the Sinai covenant, and more remotely, the primordial, unspoiled relationship that was thought to exist between God and man in the Garden of Eden. The reference to an initial covenant with creation finds another probable confirmation in Hos 6:7:

14 Hos 2:16, 18, 21. On the eschatological significance of בַּיּוֹם־הַהוּא, cf. Stuart, *Hosea-Jonah*, 57–58.

"But like Adam they transgressed the covenant (כְּאָדָם עָבְרוּ בְרִית); there they dealt faithlessly with me."[15]

God's covenant faithfulness to Israel is then expressed in a triple promise of a future betrothal which unequivocally overrides the earlier threat of divorce. The verb "betroth" (וְאֵרַשְׂתִּיךְ) is used here in an unusual way: whereas it normally describes a man's espousals with a virgin, here it denotes the betrothal of a prostitute/adulteress wife whose virginity is somehow renewed by the mercy and faithfulness of her husband:

> I will betroth you to Me forever; Yes, I will betroth you to Me in righteousness and justice, in loving kindness and mercy; I will betroth you to Me in faithfulness, and you shall know the LORD. (Hos 2:19–20)

In summary, for Hosea the nuptial metaphor is clearly situated within the context of salvation history. The setting of Israel's birth (or youth) and God's "first love" for her is the time of the Exodus (2:3, 15; 11:1; 13:4–6), an association reinforced by Hosea's frequent use of covenantal language. Israel's ongoing marital/covenantal infidelity is expressed as illegitimate cultic sacrifices set in contrast to her lawfully ordained Temple worship. Moreover, Hosea's nuptial/covenantal language recalls the creation and Eden narratives with probable allusions to the Genesis creation account and Adam (Hos 2:18; 6:7). Finally, it also displays a definite eschatological thrust: the vision of the future marriage restored to an idyllic state, the disappearance of instruments of war (2:18) and renewed fecundity of the earth (2:22) all point to a marvelous eschatological restoration and renewal of the marriage between God and Israel.[16]

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15 The verse is admittedly ambiguous. The LXX renders כְּאָדָם as ὡς ἄνθρωπος, and some modern translations follow this interpretation ("like men they transgressed the covenant," NKJ). Others prefer to read בְּאָדָם (*in* Adam, referring to a town in Gilead on the way to Shechem). However, the most literal reading of כְּאָדָם and possibly the one that makes most sense remains "as Adam." This interpretation was retained by the Vulgate ("sicut Adam transgressi sunt pactum").

16 As Levenson (*Sinai and Zion*, 79) notes, for Hosea, the covenant moves beyond its original juridical function and becomes "the stuff and substance of a vision of cosmic renewal. The entire universe takes part in the sacred remarriage of YHWH and Israel." Covenant is thus "the teleological end of creation and of history."

1.2.2 *Jeremiah*

1.2.2.1 Broken Love of Former Betrothal (Jer 2:1–4:4)

About a century after Hosea and shortly before the destruction of Jerusalem, Jeremiah also makes abundant use of the nuptial metaphor, revealing several points in common with his predecessor.[17] The main nuptial text is found in 2:1–4:4, where the city of Jerusalem is personified as YHWH's bride and identified with Israel (2:2). Acting as spokesman for God, Jeremiah tries in vain to remind the city of her former love for the Lord, situated at the time of the desert wanderings (as in Hosea). The desert is referred to as a period of betrothal:

> I remember you, the kindness of your youth, the love of your betrothal (אַהֲבַת כְּלוּלֹתָיִךְ), when you went after Me in the wilderness, in a land not sown. (Jer 2:2; cf. 2:6; cf. Hos 2:14–15)

Now, however, Israel does not fare well in Jeremiah's eyes. She has forsaken her God. In an allusion to idolatrous cultic prostitution and Baal fertility rites, she is said to have gone up "on every high mountain and under every green tree, and there played the harlot" (2:20; 3:6, 13).[18] Set in contrast to a virgin who does not forget her ornaments or a bride her attire, Israel's going after the Baals and beautifying herself to seek their love constitutes incriminating evidence showing to what extent she has forgotten her divine Husband (2:32–33).

The nuptial metaphor continues to be expressed in harsh language in chapter three. Like Hosea, Jeremiah uses the terms אִישׁ and אִשָּׁה to designate YHWH as husband and Israel/Judah as wife (Jer 3:1). Israel has "played the harlot with many lovers" (זְנִית רֵעִים רַבִּים), thereby greatly polluting the land because of her harlotries (3:1–2). The severity of her offense is underlined with a reference to the Deuteronomic prohibition for a husband to take back the wife whom he has divorced (cf. Deut 24:1–4), according to which God's divorce with His bride would be irrevocable. Yet (as in Hosea) the exhortation for her to return indicates that not all hope is lost. In 3:6 the prophet turns to the bad example of the former northern kingdom of Israel, now in ruins and exiled to Assyria. God's warnings to her went unheeded. Because of her backsliding and adultery He "put her away and gave her a certificate of divorce" (סֵפֶר כְּרִיתֻתֶיהָ) (3:8). Despite this terrifying end, Israel's "treacherous sister" Judah

17 On nuptial symbolism in Jeremiah, cf. Abma, *Bonds of Love*, 214–252; Baumann, *Liebe und Gewalt*, 111–141; Moughtin-Mumby, *Sexual and Marital Metaphors*, 80–116.

18 Cf. Craigie & Kelley, *Jeremiah 1–25*, 36.

did not fear, but "went and played the harlot also," and through her "casual harlotry" she "defiled the land and committed adultery with stones and trees" (3:9), dealing treacherously with God "as a wife treacherously departs from her husband" (3:20). Still, despite this dreadful record of marital unfaithfulness, God's marriage with Judah still stands, and He pleads to her children to come back to Him so that He can take them back to Zion/Jerusalem at a future time: "'Return, O backsliding children,' says the LORD; 'for I am married to you (אָנֹכִי בָּעַלְתִּי בָכֶם). I will take you . . . and I will bring you to Zion" (3:14).

The role of the Temple – albeit temporary and passing – as point of contact between the Lord and his bride is alluded to in the prophet's mention of the Ark of the Covenant (3:16). The sanctified seat of the divine presence and focal point of Israel's worship, now desecrated by the bride's idolatrous adultery and on the brink of disaster at the hands of the Babylonians, will be forgotten at the time of the restoration of the marriage between God and Israel. In its place, the whole city of Jerusalem will be "the throne of the Lord," gathering together not only Israel but also all the nations, transformed by a miraculous conversion whereby they no longer follow the dictates of their hearts but rather recognize the sovereignty of YHWH (3:16–17).

On four occasions, Jeremiah further expands upon the nuptial metaphor with the "daughter of Zion" motif, a female allegorical personification of Jerusalem/Israel portraying her as either virgin or mother with child. In her first appearance, her vain attempts to beautify herself for her lovers are grotesquely caricatured as useless to prevent the anguish and misery that the same lovers will soon inflict upon her:

> Though you clothe yourself with crimson, though you adorn yourself with ornaments of gold, though you enlarge your eyes with paint, In vain you will make yourself fair; your lovers will despise you; they will seek your life. For I have heard a voice as of a woman in labor, The anguish as of her who brings forth her first child, the voice of the daughter of Zion bewailing herself . . . (Jer 4:30–31)[19]

19 Cf. also Jer 6:2; 23–26; 8:19; 18:13; the personification of Israel as *daughter of Jerusalem* or *daughter of Zion*, represented as a virgin or a travailing mother, is a frequently recurring motif in several other books of the OT which we will not consider in detail here. Cf. 2 Kgs 19:21; Ps 9:14; Lam 1:6, 15; 2:1, 4, 8, 10, 13, 15, 18; 4:22; Amos 5:2; Mic 1:13; 4:8, 10, 13; Zeph 3:14; Zech 2:10; 9:9 and below, p. 18 n. 40.

1.2.2.2 The Voice of the Bridegroom and Voice of the Bride

Nuptial language also occurs in Jeremiah's use of the expression "the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride."[20] For Jeremiah, the voice of the bridegroom and bride is an indication of peace, joy and prosperity in Israel. Conversely, their absence signifies a time of desolation and destruction. The expression appears four times, three times in a context of condemnation and once in a context of consolation and hope.

The first occurrence is in chapter seven, where it is associated with Israel's corrupt Temple worship. Jeremiah is summoned to stand "in the gate of the Lord's house" to castigate those who delude themselves in thinking they are safe in the Temple despite their committing grave social iniquities (7:2–4). Only if they cease their injustice and oppression will they have the right to dwell in "this place" (7:5–7).[21] In the days of the prophet the Temple has become a den of thieves (7:11), defiled by their illicit offerings to other gods (7:18). God rejects their burnt offerings and sacrifices because they are not offered in a spirit of obedience or justice (vv. 21–26). They have polluted the Temple by setting abominations in it, even burning their children on high places (vv. 30–31). As a result, the Lord declares:

> I will cause to cease from the cities of Judah and from the streets of Jerusalem the voice of mirth and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride. (Jer 7:34)

Here also the point of reference for Israel's worship is the Exodus: The prophet recalls that already at the origin of the nation's history, when the Lord delivered His people from Egypt, obedience was more important than sacrifice (Jer 7:22–25).[22] Just as they disobeyed then, so they are still disobeying at the present critical hour of the nation's history.

The same expression referring to the voice of the bridegroom and bride returns in chapter 16. Like Hosea, Jeremiah's personal experience is meant to mirror God's feelings towards His people. But in contrast to Hosea, Jeremiah is commanded *not* to take a wife and thus not to have children (16:2) as a sign

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20 Though this expression does not directly pertain to the nuptial metaphor between God and Israel, it is worth considering because of its use in the Gospel of John. See below, section 4.3.4, p. 148. See also Bar 2:23.

21 Jeremiah's use of the terms הַמָּקוֹם and הַבַּיִת הַזֶּה אֲשֶׁר־נִקְרָא־שְׁמִי (7:11) reflects the standard Deuteronomistic expressions designating the centralized place of worship and seat of the divine presence in Israel (cf. Deut 12:11; 14:23; 16:2, 6, 11; 26:2).

22 Cf. 1 Sam 15:22; Hos 6:6; Ps 51:16–17; Matt 9:13; Mark 12:33.

of the mourning that will soon overtake the land. The absence of marital love and family is intended to reflect the grim situation in Israel at the time of the impending destruction, when one will soon no longer hear the voice of the bridegroom and voice of the bride (16:9). The covenantal point of reference is again the Exodus out of Egypt (16:14), which points to a future new Exodus when the Lord will take Israel out of many nations and bring them back into their own land (v. 15).

The castigation of Israel's sins and the threat of exile returns in chapter 25, where it is said again that the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians will result in the disappearance of

> the voice of mirth and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride, the sound of the millstones and the light of the lamp. (Jer 25:10)[23]

The last reference to the "voice of the bridegroom and voice of the bride" (Jer 33:10–11) will be mentioned below, within the context of Jeremiah's book of consolation.

1.2.2.3 Everlasting Love (Jer 31)

Nuptial imagery returns in chapter 31, in the midst of Jeremiah's book of consolation, where God declares that He has loved the "virgin Israel" with an "everlasting love" (vv. 3–4). Commentators have noticed a considerable number of common themes between this chapter and Jer 2:1–4:4. One is the announcement of Israel's future salvation and the promise of a new exodus as a pilgrimage to Zion (Jer 31:6–9, 12–14)[24] that will follow the trialing times of desert and desolation that Israel has experienced as the result of her infidelity (cf. 3:3; 6:8; 9:11). Here too it is said that Israel will encounter grace in the wilderness (31:2). The eschatological pilgrimage to Zion displays ties with the Sinai covenant in its promise of a bountiful abundance of produce of the land, with the covenantal signs of "wheat, new wine and oil" (v. 12) as material benefits of the restored relationship between YHWH and Israel.[25] In what is perhaps

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23 Interestingly, the LXX replaces "the sound of the millstones" of the MT by "the scent of ointment" (ὀσμὴν μύρου). This will be of interest to us when we examine other occurrences of ὀσμὴ μύρου in Cant 1:3–4 and in the narrative of the anointing at Bethany (John 12:3). Cf. below, p. 170. The motif of the silencing of the voices of the bridegroom and bride following the destruction of a city also appears in Rev 18:23.

24 On the eschatological pilgrimage to Zion, cf. also Isa 2:2–5.

25 Cf. Hos 2:22 and above, p. 5 n. 13.

a veiled Edenic allusion, the souls of those who will come up to Zion will be "like a well-watered garden" (כְּגַן רָוֶה),[26] forever freed of sorrows and joyfully satiated by the Lord's goodness (vv. 12–14). This redemptive action will not be a mere restoration to the former status quo but a radically new thing, expressed in the language of creation with an expression of odd sexual connotation: "For the LORD has created a new thing in the earth – a woman shall encompass a man" (כִּי־בָרָא ה' חֲדָשָׁה בָּאָרֶץ נְקֵבָה תְּסוֹבֵב גָּבֶר) (Jer 31:22).[27] It is within this context of nuptial symbolism and new creation that the well-known promise of a new covenant is given to Israel and Judah, set in contrast to the (nuptial) covenant given when they were led out of Egypt, the covenant "which they broke, though [the Lord] was 'a husband' to them" (וְאָנֹכִי בָּעַלְתִּי בָם) (31:31–32). Unlike the broken Sinai covenant, the new covenant with Israel will be permanent, like the covenant with creation and its ordinances of the sun, moon and stars, the heavens and the earth (31:35–37; cf. 33:20–22). The obvious reference to the Genesis 1 account is another indication that for Jeremiah, the nuptial metaphor is intrinsically related not only to Sinai but also to the primeval order of creation and original covenant between God and humanity.

The theme of the voice of the bridegroom and bride returns in Jer 33:10–11. The prophet tells us that in the place that was once desolate there shall be heard again

> the voice of joy and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride, the voice of those who will say: "Praise the LORD of hosts, For the LORD is good, For His mercy endures forever" – and of those who will bring the sacrifice of praise into the house of the LORD. 'For I will cause the captives of the land to return as at the first,' says the LORD. (Jer 33:11)

The wider context of this last nuptial passage summarizes the interrelated motifs seen in Jeremiah. The comparison of the permanent covenant with

26 LXX: "as a fruitful tree" (ὥσπερ ξύλον ἔγκαρπον). One also notes more garden imagery in the planting of vineyards (Jer 31:5) and flowing brooks of water (31:9).

27 This is the only occurrence of the verb בָּרָא in Jeremiah. The great differences between the ancient versions of this verse have caused consternation among exegetes. The man-woman aspect is absent from the LXX: ἔκτισεν κύριος σωτηρίαν εἰς καταφύτευσιν καινήν ἐν σωτηρίᾳ περιελεύσονται ἄνθρωποι ("the Lord has created safety for a new plantation: men shall go about in safety"). The Vg agrees with the MT: "femina circumdabit virum."

Israel with the covenant of creation returns,[28] as does the promise of an eschatological new exodus (33:7, 26) that will bring healing and forgiveness to Judah/Israel (vv. 6–8). The voice of the bridegroom and bride will be joined to the voice of praise of those sacrificing in the Temple (v. 11), and Temple sacrifices will particularly thrive (v. 18) at a time which will be ruled by the messianic king and branch of David (vv. 15–16).

In summary, Jeremiah, like Hosea, presents the marriage covenant between YHWH and Israel/Judah as firmly placed within the context of salvation history. Having originated in the desert at the time of the Exodus, its drama is played out in the cultic history of the two nations, whether faithfully centered around the Ark of the Covenant and Temple, or (more frequently) violated through cultic harlotry and adultery with the Baals on the high hills and under the green trees. Moreover, the marriage finds a more remote and ideal point of reference in the Genesis account(s) of creation and (perhaps) of the Garden of Eden. The memory of the primeval idyllic state of creation provides the ground for the hope that the marriage will not remain in its currently wounded state forever, but is moving towards an eschatological restoration and rejuvenation in the new Exodus that will lead Israel from its present barren state to the marvelously fruitful heights of Mount Zion.

1.2.3 *Ezekiel 16 and 23*

The next prophet who makes a rich use of nuptial symbolism is Ezekiel.[29] Speaking from the perspective of the Babylonian exile, he provides two dramatic descriptions of the stormy relationship between YHWH and his bride: in chapter 16, Jerusalem/Israel is a destitute maiden who was tenderly adopted by God only to grievously betray Him; in chapter 23, Samaria and Jerusalem are portrayed as the two harlot sisters Oholah and Oholibah.

Chapter 16 can be divided into five scenes. The first (16:3–6a) describes the miserable origins and condition of Jerusalem. She was an infant girl originating from Canaan, with an Amorite as father and Hittite as mother. She was unwashed, loathed, thrown in an open field to be mercilessly abandoned there and left to struggle in her own blood. The second scene (6b-14) describes God adopting and betrothing the maiden. In a prophetic word that evokes a real creative act, YHWH speaks life into her and makes her "thrive like a plant

28 Cf. the covenant with day and night and the ordinances of heaven and earth in Jer 33:20–22, 25.

29 On Ezekiel's nuptial imagery, cf. Baumann, *Liebe und Gewalt*, 142–174; Galambush, *Jerusalem in the Book of Ezekiel*, esp. 61–126; Moughtin-Mumby, *Sexual and Marital Metaphors*, 156–205.

in the field" so that she "grew, matured, and became very beautiful" though still remaining "naked and bare" (16:7). This intermediate state lasts until a moving covenant-making ceremony takes place:

> "When I passed by you again and looked upon you, indeed your time was the time of love (עֵת דֹּדִים); so I spread my wing over you (וָאֶפְרֹשׂ כְּנָפִי עָלַיִךְ) and covered your nakedness. Yes, I swore an oath to you and entered into a covenant with you (וָאָבוֹא בִבְרִית אֹתָךְ), and you became mine," says the Lord GOD. (Ezek 16:8)

The sealing of the oath and covenant whereby the Lord "spreads his wings" over the abandoned maiden and takes her as His own is without a doubt a "nuptial moment" between them.[30] The covenantal ceremony is followed by the divine Bridegroom lavishing upon His bride all the best things. Beginning with a washing and purification in water (which might be intended as a bridal bath),[31] He effects a splendid metamorphosis of the maiden's formerly miserable state by anointing her with oil, clothing her with fine linen and silk, adorning her with a crown and precious jewels of gold and silver, and providing her with the finest foods (vv. 9–13a). At the end of this process of beautification and glorification, Jerusalem becomes "exceedingly beautiful" and "succeeds to royalty," with her fame going out among the nations because of her beauty, perfect through God's splendor which He bestowed on her (16:13–14).

As Renée Bloch has shown, Ezekiel 16 appears to be a *historical allegory* or anthology of biblical allusions to Israel's history, beginning with the time of the patriarchs and leading up to the eve of the Temple's destruction at the hand of the Babylonians.[32] The humble origin and "birth" of the maiden in the "land of the Canaanites" likely refers to the sojourn of the patriarchs in

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30 Zimmerli (*Ezechiel*, 351) states that the expression וָאָבוֹא בִבְרִית אֹתָךְ in Ezek 16:8 leaves no doubt that a betrothal is intended. On the image of a man "spreading his wing" over a woman as the symbolic gesture of a marriage proposal, cf. Ruth's request to Boaz in Ruth 3:9: "Spread your wing over your maidservant" (וּפָרַשְׂתָּ כְנָפֶךָ עַל־אֲמָתְךָ). Cf. Kruger, "The Hem of the Garment in Marriage"; Infante, *Lo sposo e la sposa*, 51.

31 On the symbolism of the bridal bath and its relation to baptism, cf. the discussion on the relationship between Eph 5:26 and Ezek 16:9 below, p. 222.

32 Cf. Bloch, "Ezechiel XVI, exemple parfait du procédé midrashique dans la Bible," 212–17; Brownlee, *Ezekiel 1–19*, 221, 227. Galambush notes: "Ezekiel is unique [among the prophets] in his use of the marriage metaphor to provide a comprehensive . . . survey of Israelite and Judean history . . . Ezekiel . . . thoroughly reviews Israelite and Judean alliances, both past and present, as part of his accusation of adultery against Jerusalem" (*Jerusalem in the Book of Ezekiel*, 79–80).

Canaan. The miserable time when she "struggled in her blood" is the period of Egyptian slavery, and the language used to describe her fruitful growth (רְבָבָה כְּצֶמַח הַשָּׂדֶה נְתַתִּיךְ וַתִּרְבִּי וַתִּגְדְּלִי, Ezek 16:7) recalls the description of the nation's rapid multiplying in Egypt (cf. Exod 1:7, 12). The nuptial and covenantal "time of love" corresponds to the time of the Exodus and Sinai covenant (Ezek 16:8; cf. Exod 19:4–6),[33] when the Lord showered His bride with gifts (Ezek 16:9–13).[34] The climax of the narrative and the maiden's most glorious hour when her "renown went forth among the nations" (Ezek 16:14) refers to the reigns of

33 Strengthening the association of this scene with the time of the Exodus are a number of possible allusions in Ezek 16:9–10 to the Tabernacle worship: the maiden's washing in water and anointing with oil recalls the washing and anointing of the Aaronic priests (Exod 29:4–7) as well as the anointing oil for the tent of meeting (Exod 30:25–26). The maiden's "embroidered cloth" (רִקְמָה) is related to the מַעֲשֵׂה רֹקֵם found almost exclusively in the cultic context of the Tabernacle or of the priests garments, namely the screen of the Tabernacle door (Exod 26:36), the gate of the court (Exod 27:16), and the priests' girdle (Exod 28:39). Her sandals are made of badger skin (תַּחַשׁ), a relatively rare word which appears elsewhere only in Exodus and Numbers as the material used for the covering of the Tabernacle and for the wrapping of its furnishings when it was moved (Cf. Exod 25:5; 26:14; 35:7, 23; 36:19, 34; Num 4:6–25). A further connection between Ezek 16 and the Tabernacle worship is seen in the LXX, which inaccurately (or deliberately?) translates תַּחַשׁ as ὑάκινθος (jacinth). ὑάκινθος is normally the standard equivalent of תְּכֵלֶת, the blue material used together with "fine linen" (שֵׁשׁ, also part of the maiden's apparel) to make the Tabernacle curtains and veil (Exod 26:1, 31) and Aaron's priestly garments (Exod 28:5, 8, 15, 33). Cf. Bloch, "Ezéchiel XVI" 198–203, for more literary parallels between the vocabularies of Ezek 16 and of the P and D sources.

34 This reading of Ezek 16 as allegorical history was later taken up and developed in very similar fashion by the Targumist: for him the girl's birthplace in the land of the Canaanites (v. 3) refers to God's revelation to Abraham; her days as an abandoned new-born child (v. 4) is the Egyptian oppression; "no eye pitied you" (v. 5) refers to the eye of Pharaoh and her "casting out" is interpreted as the throwing of the male children into the Nile; the Lord's "passing by" her (v. 6) is his remembrance of His covenant with the patriarchs, and her "blood" refers to the blood of circumcision and of the Passover lambs. The growth "like a plant in the field" (v. 7) is the people's growth in Egypt, and the Lord's second passing by her (v. 8) is the episode of the burning bush. The washing in water and anointing (v. 9) is the redemption from Egyptian servitude, and the girl's clothing (v. 10) refers to the consecration of the priesthood. The adornment with ornaments, bracelets and chain (v. 11) refers to the people's sanctification by the words of the Torah on the stone tablets, while the ring, earrings and crown (v. 12) respectively describe the Ark of the Covenant, the cloud of glory, and the angel of the Lord. The gold and silver, fine linen, silk and embroidered cloth represent the Tabernacle, and the fine flour, honey and oil (v. 13) describe the excellent taste of the manna.

David and especially Solomon, when Jerusalem became the capital city of Israel that was greatly admired by the neighboring nations.[35]

But everything goes downhill from this point on. The third scene (16:15–34) describes the shameful betrayal and degradation of the bride. Rather than responding with thankfulness to the generosity of her protector and husband, she trusts in her own beauty and turns to harlotry/idolatry. Borrowing from Hosea and Jeremiah,[36] Ezekiel underlines the cultic and sacrificial aspects of Israel's harlotry: in the language of the Priestly code, she offers as a "pleasing odor" (רֵיחַ נִיחֹחַ) to her lovers – the foreign divinities – the bread, cakes, oil and honey that the Lord had given her. To this grave offense is added the abomination of child sacrifice (vv. 19–21). Ezekiel's account of Israel's betrayal is even worse than Hosea's: for whereas in Hosea Israel was at least partly motivated by the material benefits that she could obtain from her lovers, in Ezekiel she is worse than a harlot because she does not even ask for payment from them (vv. 31–34). The historical aspect of the scene is apparent in the specific mention of the Assyrians and Chaldeans (vv. 28–29) as Israel's lovers – precisely the two peoples who would destroy and bring into exile the northern and southern kingdoms.

The fourth scene (16:35–59) describes God's wrath and punishment towards His unfaithful bride, which will be harshly carried out by the foreign nations she courted. Jerusalem became even more corrupt than her "elder and younger sisters," respectively Samaria and Sodom. For the first time in the OT, God's "jealousy" (קִנְאָה) appears within the context of the nuptial metaphor (vv. 38, 42) as an expression of His passionate love for His bride. Though exile awaits Jerusalem because of her waywardness, the fifth scene (16:60–63) is a testimony to the triumph of mercy over judgment, where the Lord promises to remember His former covenant with Israel from "the days of [her] youth" and to (re)establish this everlasting covenant with her.

In chapter 23 the nuptial metaphor is extended in similar fashion to the two adulterous sisters Oholah/Samaria and Oholibah/Jerusalem, who are whoring with Assyria and Babylon, respectively. Unlike in Hosea and Jeremiah, the time of the Exodus is not idealized here as a period of pristine romance between them and God, but rather is remembered as a time when she was already

35 Cf. 1 Kgs 10. Up to this point the metaphor carries a double symbolism: the maiden represents Jerusalem (16:2–3), but the city really represents the nation of Israel, since the city was only captured during David's reign. Cf. Allen, *Ezekiel 1–19*, 238; Brownlee, *Ezekiel 1–19*, 226, 228.

36 Bloch has noted the many thematic parallels between Ezekiel 16, Hosea 2, and Jeremiah 3 ("Ezéchiel XVI" 203–07).

committing harlotry in Egypt (vv. 2, 8, 19–21, 27).[37] Oholah and Oholibah's idolatrous adultery is identified with the defilement of the Lord's sanctuary and Temple (called "my house," בֵּיתִי) and the profanation of His Sabbaths (vv. 38–39). More cultic allusions to the misuse of the Temple furnishings, incense and oil are also visible in the reproach that Israel "sat on a stately couch, with a table prepared before it, on which you had set My incense and My oil" (Ezek 23:41). Unlike chapter 16, this chapter does not conclude with a reversal of the situation and 'happy end,' but with a harsh judgment meted out to the two wayward sisters.

In summary, the historical component of the nuptial metaphor is visible in Ezekiel 16 and 23, as it is in Hosea and Jeremiah. Egypt and the time of the Exodus are the point of reference for the marriage, but far from depicting this period as an idyllic time of romantic betrothal, Ezekiel drives home the fact that Israel was already promiscuous back then. In both chapters 16 and 23, the cultic element of Israel's adultery and its defiling effect on the Temple is predominant. However, Ezekiel does not develop an eschatological aspect of the marriage between God and Israel, apart from the vague promise of a future "everlasting covenant" that will provide atonement for Israel's sins (16:60–63).[38]

1.2.4 *Isaiah*

Of all the prophets, Isaiah contains the most nuptial passages.[39] These are found in all parts of the book, though with a markedly different emphasis between first Isaiah (focused on the present broken state of the marriage between God and Israel) and second/third Isaiah (focused on God's future restoration of the marriage). The nuptial metaphor already appears in the first chapter, where the prophet laments that Jerusalem, the "daughter of Zion" and "faithful city" has "become a harlot" (זוֹנָה) (1:8, 21). This chapter places a heavy emphasis on Israel's cult. The problem here is not illegitimate worship offered to foreign divinities (as in Hosea and Jeremiah) but rather legitimate cultic practices – the offering of sacrifices and incense, the celebration of Sabbaths and feasts and the recitation of prayers in YHWH's Temple – that are tainted

37 Ezek 20:7 also ascribes idolatry to Israel already in Egypt. The depiction of the people as deviant from the start is possibly a rhetorical device used by the prophet to castigate a contemporary Judah that was aligning itself politically with Egypt in the hope of freeing itself from the yoke of Babylon. Cf. Allen, *Ezekiel 20–48*, 48.

38 Although references to the Garden of Eden and to a glorious eschatological restoration of Israel are important features elsewhere in Ezekiel, they are not directly associated with the nuptial passages of chapters 16 and 23.

39 On Isaiah's nuptial symbolism, cf. Baumann, *Liebe und Gewalt*, 183–228.

and rendered worthless by the people's social injustice and oppression. Despite this dire situation, the prophet expresses hope that after a time of purgation and purification Zion will again be called "the city of righteousness, the faithful city" (1:26).[40]

Another nuptial allusion in First Isaiah is seen in the messianic and eschatological passage on the "branch of the Lord" found in 4:2–6.[41] At the revelation of the Lord's beautiful and glorious branch, all the inhabitants of Jerusalem will be called "holy." This will happen "when the Lord has washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion, and purged the blood of Jerusalem from her midst" (Isa 4:4). This washing of the daughters of Zion is reminiscent of God washing off the blood of his bride in Ezekiel 16:9, and it could be that Ezekiel was familiar with this Isaian tradition and drew inspiration from it in the writing of his own text. Isaiah then describes how following this purification there will be a communion between God and Israel that will recall the former times when God dwelt with His people in the desert. Worthy of note is the presence of a חֻפָּה, a shelter or "bridal canopy" over the divine glory:[42]

> Then the LORD will create above every dwelling place of Mount Zion, and above her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day and the shining of a flaming fire by night. For over all the glory there will be a covering (חֻפָּה). (Isa 4:5)

Immediately following the reference to the חֻפָּה begins Isaiah's Song of the Vineyard (5:1–7), which opens with the introductory words: "Let me sing for my beloved (לִידִידִי) a love song (שִׁירַת דּוֹדִי) regarding His vineyard" (5:1). The song displays three levels of symbolism: At the literal level, it expresses the disappointment of the vinedresser towards his vine, which has produced sour grapes instead of the good grapes he expected. On a second level, the relationship between the vinedresser and his vine is symbolic of the disappointment of a man who laments his failed love. This second level points to a third one – the frustrated love of God for Israel. The vine is frequently used in biblical literature as a symbol representing Israel, in some cases, and in others a beloved

40 The female personification of Jerusalem as the "daughter of Zion" recurs several times throughout the entire book (in first, second and third Isaiah); cf. Isa 10:32; 16:1; 37:22; 52:2; 62:11.

41 The Targum Jonathan attests to the early Messianic interpretation of this verse: מְשִׁיחָא דַיוי = צֶמַח ה'.

42 Cf. Ps 19:6; Joel 2:16 for the nuptial use of חֻפָּה.

woman.[43] The vineyard is thus symbolic here of the song's bride, who is in turn a symbol of Israel, the bride of the Lord, with the words יְדִידִי and דּוֹדִי poetically referring to God and to His love for Israel.[44] Moreover, the fact that the prophet calls YHWH "my beloved" may well mean that as the one who is singing the song, he is taking on the role of what later became known as the *shoshbin*, the intermediary male friend of the bridegroom who negotiates the Jewish marriage contract.[45]

Deutero- and Trito-Isaiah take up the nuptial motif into the songs of consolation to Israel.[46] While some passages are no more comforting than the harsh castigations of the unfaithful bride delivered by Hosea, Jeremiah and Ezekiel, others express great hope for a glorious eschatological marriage between bridegroom and bride. Isa 49:14–26 depicts the enduring fidelity of God as He assures Zion that she will "clothe herself" with her sons returning from exile "as an ornament" and put them on herself as a bride puts on her attire (49:18). In answer to her doubts that she has been forgotten or even divorced, YHWH speaks of his love as a maternal one, unable to forget the child of her womb (49:15). In chapter 50, the metaphor shifts and a distinction is made between the mother who was given a bill of divorce (a transcendent Jerusalem/Israel?) and her children (the individual Israelites?). As if replying to accusations that He unjustly repudiated her, God replies that He put her away not because of a lack of faithfulness on His part but rather because of her children's transgressions (50:1).

The personification of the daughter of Zion and the promise of her future glorification is developed in chapter 52, where she is exhorted to put on splendid garments and to leave behind her former oppressed condition:

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43 For the vine as symbol of Israel, cf. Deut 32:32; Hos 10:1; Jer 2:21 (in nuptial context!); 5:10; 6:9; 8:13; 12:10; Ezek 15:1–8; 19:10–14; Ps 80:9–19. For the vine as symbol of a beloved woman; cf. Cant 1:6; 7:9; 8:12.

44 יְדִידִי is sometimes used to refer to Israel as beloved of the Lord (cf. Deut 33:12; Jer 11:15; Ps 60:7); and דּוֹדִי is well know as the designation of the lover in the Song of Songs.

45 Cf. Infante, *Lo sposo e la sposa*, 33; Junker, "Die literarische Art von Is. 5:1–7" (Bib 40 [1959] 259–66); Watts, *Isaiah 1–33*, 53. For the ANE background to the "friend of the bridegroom, see A. van Selms, "The best man and bride – from Sumer to St John," JNES 9, 1950, pp. 65–75. An example of this role is found in Judges 14:20: "And Samson's wife was given to his companion (מֵרֵעֵ, LXX νυμφαγωγός) who had been his best man (אֲשֶׁר רֵעָה לוֹ)." See also the discussion below (p. 148) on John the Baptist's identity as φίλος τοῦ νυμφίου or שׁוֹשְׁבִין (John 3:29).

46 Cf. Abma, *Bonds of Love*, 53–109.

> Awake, awake! Put on your strength, O Zion; Put on your beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city! . . . Shake yourself from the dust, arise; Sit down, O Jerusalem! Loose yourself from the bonds of your neck, O captive daughter of Zion! (Isa 52:1–2)

This chapter can plausibly be read as a description of the bride putting on her wedding garments in preparation for the wedding described in chapter 54, one of the most beautiful nuptial poems of the Hebrew Bible. There we read that Israel's former destitute state, when she was barren and desolate (54:1), ashamed and disgraced (v. 4), forsaken and grieved in spirit (v. 6), will soon be entirely forgotten, giving way to the exultation and jubilation of a newly found fruitfulness. Israel will "forget the shame of [her] youth, and will not remember the reproach of [her] widowhood anymore" (54:4), thanks to the bountiful mercies of her divine husband:

> "For your Maker is your husband, The LORD of hosts is His name; and your Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel; He is called the God of the whole earth. For the LORD has called you like a woman forsaken and grieved in spirit, like a youthful wife when you were refused," says your God. "For a mere moment I have forsaken you, but with great mercies I will gather you. With a little wrath I hid my face from you for a moment; but with everlasting kindness I will have mercy on you," says the LORD, your Redeemer. (Isa 54:4–8)

God's role as redeemer (גֹּאֵל) is set here in a nuptial context, signifying His carrying out a social obligation of giving shelter and protection to an abandoned widow (cf. Ruth 3:8, 12–13). The concrete expression of YHWH's mercy and love for his bride will be the ingathering from exile, which was but a temporary "hiding of his face" that served a purpose of purification of the nation towards the goal of final union.

The historical dimension of deutero-Isaiah's nuptial imagery can be seen from the general context of his nuptial poems. The recurring motif of the eschatological new exodus (52:4, 8) echoes the narrative of the exodus from Egypt. At the same time, in the midst of the nuptial imagery, the eschatological restoration of Zion and its blooming desert explicitly recalls the distant memory of the lush Garden of Eden:

> For the LORD will comfort Zion, He will comfort all her waste places; He will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the

> LORD; Joy and gladness will be found in it, thanksgiving and the voice of melody. (Isa 51:3)

With the text mostly focused on Israel's future from the perspective of the exile, and with the Temple reduced to rubble at the time of the writing of Second Isaiah, there are no allusions to the nation's cult or Temple worship. However, it seems fair to say that the very reference to Zion and Jerusalem presupposes the presence of a new Temple and the restoration of God's glorious presence in the midst of the city among His bridal people.

In Third Isaiah, nuptial/sexual motifs appear in chapter 57, but gone is the tender and hopeful message of consolation of second Isaiah. With a tone of severe castigation akin to that of Hosea, Jeremiah and Ezekiel, the Israelites are called "offspring of the adulterer and the harlot" (v. 3). The language is suggestive of both sexual and cultic infidelity: they are inflaming [themselves] with gods under every green tree (Isa 57:5), bringing drink offerings and grain offerings to them (v. 6). The text continues in graphic detail where Israel's idolatry is described in terms of "setting her bed" before the foreign divinities, "uncovering herself" to them and making a covenant with them:

> On a lofty and high mountain you have set your bed; even there you went up to offer sacrifice. Also behind the doors and their posts You have set up your remembrance; for you have uncovered yourself to those other than Me, and have gone up to them; You have enlarged your bed and made a covenant with them; You have loved their bed, where you saw their nudity. You went to the king with ointment, and increased your perfumes. (Isa 57:7–9)

The last nuptial passage in Isaiah (61:10–62:12) returns to the spirit of consolation and hope of second Isaiah, revealing many points of contact with chapters 49 and 54 in the clothing of garments of salvation and robes of righteousness (cf. 52:1), and the glorious adorning of the bridegroom and bride (cf. 49:18):

> I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, My soul shall be joyful in my God; For He has clothed me with the garments of salvation, He has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself with ornaments and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels. (Isa 61:10)

This leads to a final song of praise for the glorious bride Jerusalem/Zion (Isa 62:1–5). The prophet refuses to remain silent until Zion's righteousness and

salvation shine forth and are universally recognized by all Gentiles and kings. She is to be a "crown of glory" and "royal diadem" in the hand of the Lord, who will rejoice and delight in her as a bridegroom rejoices over his bride.

> You shall no longer be termed Forsaken, nor shall your land any more be termed Desolate; But you shall be called Hephzibah, and your land Beulah; For the LORD delights in you, and your land shall be married. For as a young man marries a virgin, so shall your sons marry you; And as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God rejoice over you. (Isa 62:3–5)

The marriage here takes on several dimensions. The bridal figure of Zion whom God marries represents not only the city of Jerusalem but also the land of Israel. Moreover, we see here a remarkable picture of a *hieros gamos*, foreshadowing a kabbalistic concept that will be developed much later in Jewish history: On the one hand, Zion is the personified city and God's beloved bride. Yet on the other hand, Zion's "sons" will also marry her. This means that the transcendent, personified Zion is in fact a mediating figure, married to God in the heavenly realm, but also married to her "sons" – the children of Israel, here on earth. This is exactly the mediating role that is attributed to the figure of Lady Wisdom in the wisdom literature of the Second Temple period, which will be the subject of the next section.

1.2.5 *Summary: Nuptial Imagery in the OT Prophets*

The four prophetic books we have studied connect their nuptial symbolism with the time of the Exodus,[47] either by idealizing it as a time of pristine, youthful love (Hosea, Jeremiah), depicting it as a time when Israel was already engaging in idolatry/harlotry (Ezek 23), or using it as a pattern for the eschatological new exodus (second/third Isaiah). Curiously, the Sinai covenant is never mentioned as playing any significant role in the nuptials between God and Israel – a situation that will become very different in the later, midrashic

47 Following Van Hoonaker, Coppens ("Miscellanées Bibliques," *Bulletin d'Histoire et d'Exégèse de l'Ancien Testament* 23 (1947): 178) and Morgenstern ("The Despoiling of the Egyptians," *JBL* 68 (1949): 1), Seaich (*A Great Mystery*, 29–33) argues that the account of the Exodus itself appears to be a "conscious readaptation of a former *hieros gamos* between God and Man in the desert" (p. 29). The argument is based on the re-reading of Exod 11:1–2 "when he [Pharaoh] sends you [the Israelites] away completely" (כְּשַׁלְּחוֹ כָּלָה) to "just as they send away a bride" (כְּשַׁלַּח כַּלָּה), and on the bridal character of the borrowed jewels of silver and gold that adorned the Israelite women when they left Egypt.

literature where Sinai becomes *the* moment of betrothal between God and His people. Secondly, all four prophets draw a strong connection between nuptial symbolism and the way it is played out in Israel's cultic worship. This is most often expressed negatively, describing the people's idolatry in terms of harlotry or adultery that violates and desecrates the legitimate Temple service. On a third level, one can discern in Hosea, Jeremiah, and Isaiah associations between the nuptial passages and the traditions of Genesis 1–2 referring to the dawn of human history (either the creation or Garden of Eden narrative).[48] Finally, all four prophets depict the marriage between God and Israel as a dynamic reality moving forward towards an eschatological fulfillment. No matter how bad the present conjugal situation appears, all express great hope that it will somehow be perfectly restored at the end of days.[49]

On a final note, it should be mentioned that the marriage between YHWH and Israel in the OT prophets never appears to represent an actual mystical union or sensually perceptible union with the deity.[50] It always remains a mere allegorical symbol of the covenant between God and His people, to be faithfully kept through obedient observance of the law, proper cult in the Temple and righteous social conduct towards one's neighbor. This, however, will begin to change in Wisdom Literature.

1.3 Background (B): Nuptial Symbolism in Wisdom Literature

The wisdom literature of the Bible bears a distinctly universal character. In marked contrast to the prophetic writings, the books of Proverbs, Qoheleth and Job are largely detached from the historical tradition of Israel and from the great salvific events of the nation's past such as the Exodus, the Sinai theophany, and the Mosaic covenant. By contrast, Wisdom's standing in post-biblical wisdom literature is quite different. In the books of Sirach, Baruch and Wisdom of Solomon, Wisdom is "Judaized" and reintegrated into the historical and religious traditions of Israel, depicted as being present throughout the various stages of the nation's history. This national particularism coexists with

48 Associations between nuptial imagery and the Garden of Eden are absent from Ezekiel, but in one place the Garden of Eden is associated with the eschatologically restored land of Israel (Ezek 36:35).

49 Ezekiel also has a less explicit eschatology of hope in the direct context of his nuptial passages, but this eschatological motion is otherwise very strong in the last part of the book (cf. chapters 36–48).

50 Cf. Stauffer, "γαμέω, γάμος," TDNT 1 (1964), 653.

a wider universalism whereby Wisdom is seen as the inheritance of and gift to all humanity: on some occasions she is identified with Israel's Torah, while in other places she is thought of as the eternal, intelligent principle and source of the entire cosmos.[51] Already in Proverbs, Wisdom is said to have a divine origin, and later, in the Wisdom of Solomon, she takes on the form of an emanation of God identified with the divine spirit. Moreover, in what Murphy has called "the most striking personification in the entire Bible,"[52] divine Wisdom is personified and portrayed as the figure of Lady Wisdom, a female hypostasis who takes on the traits of a mother or wife. Accordingly, the relationship of Lady Wisdom with men is often described in nuptial language, at times reminiscent of the Song of Songs: her beauty is praised, she is desired and loved like a bride, and she courts her followers and seductively invites them to eat at her table, promising riches, honors, and abundant life.

Nuptial imagery in wisdom literature thus takes on a radically different shape from the nuptial metaphor of the prophets. Whereas in Hosea, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Isaiah the male figure is always God, and the female (as bride, virgin, mother, harlot or adulteress) always Jerusalem or Israel, in the wisdom books these roles are reversed. Now, the female protagonist is the quasi-divine figure, Lady Wisdom, and the humans she courts are always implicitly male. Moreover, God in a certain sense "fades into the background." One no longer observes a direct nuptial relationship between the Lord and His people. Rather, Wisdom now acts as an intermediary between God and humans. She is a type of "divine surrogate," mediating the role of the divinity who seeks communion with men and often portrayed as being in relationship with two different partners: she is bride of both God and the wise man, which results in what Zimmermann has called a "peculiar love triangle."[53] If such "love triangles" generally result in jealousy and discord in human relationships, this is not the case in the God-Wisdom-man triangle. Lady Wisdom' two relationships do not compete with one another. On the contrary, the love between YHWH and חכמה, "described by images of love between a man and a woman, becomes the archetype of human love for Wisdom and of love in general."[54] In addition, the human protagonists are no longer viewed as one personalized, collective figure representing the entire people (Jerusalem, Israel or the daughter of Zion); they

51 Bennema ("The Strands of Wisdom Tradition in Intertestamental Judaism," 61) proposes that there are four distinct strands of Jewish sapiential tradition rooted in the OT: "the Torah-centred, the Spirit-centred, the Apocalyptic, and the Qumranian wisdom tradition."

52 Murphy, *The Tree of Life*, 133.

53 Zimmermann, "The Love Triangle of Lady Wisdom," 244.

54 Zimmermann, "The Love Triangle of Lady Wisdom," 258.

retain, rather, their individuality. The collectivity of Israel in the prophets has given way to the individuality of each person whom Wisdom calls to come into communion with her.

In this section I will briefly survey the female personification of Wisdom and her role in the history of Israel and of the world, beginning with a general introduction to the figure of Lady Wisdom as she appears in the books of Proverbs, Ben Sira, Baruch, and the Wisdom of Solomon.[55] I will then consider the nuptial imagery employed to describe Lady Wisdom's relationship with men, including parallels between the wisdom literature and the Song of Songs. Finally, I will briefly examine the historical aspect of this nuptial symbolism, sketching out how the later wisdom books portray Lady Wisdom's wanderings throughout the history of Israel and of mankind.

1.3.1 *Proverbs*

The female personification of Wisdom appears for the first time in the book of Proverbs.[56] On three occasions, Wisdom calls aloud outside and in the streets, raising her voice in the open squares and exhorting simple ones and fools to give heed to her (Prov 1:20–33; 8:1–36; 9:1–6). The reader is encouraged to "love her" (אהב) and "embrace her" (חבק) (Prov 4:6, 8). She speaks noble things: from her lips come what is right and her mouth utters truth (8:6–7). In her are found justice, prudence, knowledge and counsel (8:8–9; 12–16; 20), and her instruction is beyond price (8:10–11). In Proverbs, Wisdom is the first of God's creation. She declares that "the Lord acquired/created me (קָנָנִי/ἔκτισέν) at the beginning of his way" (8:22), and before anything else existed she was "brought forth" or "begotten" (חוֹלָלְתִּי) (8:25–29). She was thus already present at creation, standing beside God "like a master workman" (אָמוֹן, 8:30),[57] and it was by her that the Lord founded the earth and established the heavens (3:19–20).

In Prov 9:1–6, Lady Wisdom invites men to a sumptuous banquet after having built her house, hewn out her seven pillars, slaughtered her meat, mixed her wine, and furnished her table. She invites all to come and eat of her bread

55 For an overview of the figure of Lady Wisdom in Wisdom literature, see Nickelsburg & Stone, *Faith and Piety in Ancient Judaism*, 203–231; Zimmermann, "The Love Triangle of Lady Wisdom: Sacred Marriage in Jewish Wisdom Literature?", 243–58; Grabbe, *Wisdom of Solomon*, 68–80; U. Wilckens, "σοφία, σοφός" in TDNT 7:497–500; Seaich, *A Great Mystery*, 33–38.

56 Wisdom's female character is not yet evident in Job 28:12–28.

57 The LXX renders אָמוֹן as ἁρμόζουσα (= join or give in marriage). Paul uses the same word ἁρμόζω in 2 Cor 11:2 when he declares that he has "betrothed" (ἡρμοσάμην) the Corinthian community to Christ as a pure virgin.

and drink of the wine that she has mixed. This invitation competes with that of her arch-rival, Dame Folly, represented as an adulteress who also attempts to entice men by her charms (Prov 2:16–22; 5:1–20; 6:20–35; 7:5–27; 9:13–18). But whereas dishonor, destruction and death lie in wait behind the adulteress' temptations, truth, understanding and life are found at Wisdom's table.

Who – or *what*, ontologically – is the Lady Wisdom of Proverbs? Though she is of divine origin, intelligent, personal, loving, existing before creation and even playing a role in it, she remains nonetheless a created entity. Von Rad suggests that "wisdom is the form in which Jahweh's will and his accompanying of man (i.e. his salvation) approaches man," not as an "'It,' teaching, guidance, salvation or the like, but of a person, a summoning 'I.'" Wisdom is thus "the form in which Jahweh makes himself present" yet not quite Jahweh himself but rather "the thoughts which God cherished in creating the world" (Prov 3:19).[58]

1.3.2 *Ben Sira*

Ben Sira[59] echoes Proverbs[60] in affirming that the Lord created Wisdom before all things (Sir 1:4, 7). The feminine personality of Wisdom (σοφία) – as mother and wife – particularly shines through in this book. With tender motherly care she "exalts her sons and gives help to those who seek her" (4:11). Loving her is a source of life and abundance: "Whoever loves her loves life, and those who seek her early will be filled with joy" (4:12). Though at first her discipline seems "harsh to the uninstructed" (4:17; 6:20), in the end she will "gladden him, and will reveal her secrets to him" (4:18). Her wise followers "will wear her like a glorious robe, and put her on like a crown of gladness" (6:31), and so they are encouraged to encamp near her house and pitch their tent (σκηνή) near her and thus "lodge in an excellent lodging place" (14:24–25). Lady Wisdom will come to meet the man who fears the Lord "like a mother, and like the wife of his youth she will welcome him." As in Proverbs, communion with her is depicted as the sharing of a meal with her: "She will feed him with the bread of understanding and give him the water of wisdom to drink" (15:2–3). For this reason,

58 Gerhard von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*. New York: Harper & Row, 1962, I, 444.

59 For general introductions on Ben Sira, cf. *Die Weisheit des Jesus Sirach*, erklärt von Rudolf Smend (1906); Di Lella, "Wisdom of Ben Sira" in ABD 6:931–45 (1992); Skehan and Di Lella, *The Wisdom of Ben Sira*, 3–92 (1987). For more specific studies cf. below, p. 56 n. 1.

60 On Ben Sira's dependence upon Proverbs, cf. Corley, "An Intertextual Study of Proverbs and Ben Sira." Ilan notes that "an interesting development has taken place in the presentation of Lady Wisdom in Ben Sira. She has become much more feminine and erotic than Lady Wisdom of Proverbs, and her pursuit by the seeker of wisdom takes on a far greater metaphoric quality." ("Canonization and Gender in Qumran," 543).

men's souls remain thirsty only when they refuse to draw near to her (51:24). Sirach's most significant passage pertaining to Lady Wisdom, chapter 24, will be examined in detail in chapter 2 below.[61]

1.3.3 *Baruch*

Two major sections of the book of Baruch are relevant to our study. The first is the hymn of praise of Wisdom (Bar 3:9–4:4), and the second is the song of encouragement to Israel (4:5–5:9), where Jerusalem is depicted as an innocent mother and widow who mourns the loss of her children.

Bar 3:9–4:4, speaking to Israel in exile, takes up the motif of personalized Wisdom seen in Proverbs and Ben Sira. Wisdom (called φρόνησις (3:9, 14, 18) or σοφία (3:12, 23)) is a feminine "she." Israel is in exile because they have "forsaken the fountain of Wisdom" which is the "way of God" (3:12–13). Borrowing a theme from Job (28:12–28),[62] Baruch underlines the elusiveness of Wisdom who was not found by the powerful, the wealthy, and the strong (3:16–21), was not heard of in foreign nations (3:22–23) or even known among the men of old in ancient Israel (3:24–28). Wisdom is seen as God's plan in creation, and no one knows the way to her except God the Creator (3:29–35). At the height of this tension, the climax of the hymn is reached and the identity of wisdom revealed. Despite her apparently ineffable and unreachable character, it turns out that God has revealed to Israel the way to her. She has in fact "appeared upon earth and lived among men" as "the book of the commandment of God, and the law that endures forever. All who hold her fast will live, and those who forsake her will die" (3:36–4:1). Wisdom is thus identified with the Torah that was given at Sinai.[63]

The second nuptial element of Baruch is found in the song of encouragement to Israel in the last section of the book (4:5–5:9). Here Lady Wisdom makes way for the return of personified Jerusalem as mourning mother and widow (cf. Isa 50:1; 54:4 above). The familiar images return of YHWH as Father who raised Israel, and Jerusalem as mother who reared and nurtured them as her children (4:8, 11) but is now deprived of them. Her sons and daughters were sold to the foreign nations because they sacrificed to demons rather than to God (4:6–7). This passage, however, reveals a noticeable development from the personification of Jerusalem/Zion seen in the prophets. In contrast to the passages in Hosea, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Isaiah where the mother and

61 Cf. below, p. 56.

62 On Bar 3:9–4:4 and its relationship with Job 28 and other texts, cf. Sheppard, *Wisdom as a Hermeneutical Construct*, 84–99; Sinnott, *The Personification of Wisdom*, 88–109.

63 On Wisdom as Torah, cf. below, p. 32 and the discussion on Sir 24:23, p. 76.

spouse is an unfaithful adulteress, here Jerusalem – distinct from her wayward children – remains pure and innocent. As Infante writes:

> While in Hosea and in the successive prophets it is always the mother and spouse who is unfaithful and prostitutes herself and the children who pay the consequences with deportation and exile (Hos 2:6; Jer 31:15–22; Isa 49:20–23), in Baruch the guilty ones are the children and it is because of their fault that the mother is repudiated (Bar 4:12).[64]

Though the motif of the mother rejected because of the sins of her children was introduced in Isa 50:1, Isaiah says nothing about the innocence of the mother. For Baruch, however, this is a central theme and a real theological novelty.[65] Grieving Jerusalem has no sins to confess here. Her identity somehow transcends the individual Israelites and their faults, in a personification that prepares the way for the Church "holy and without blemish" of Ephesians 5:27. Though in former times she nurtured her children with joy, Jerusalem is now "a widow and bereaved of many" (Bar 4:12). The widow analogy does not strictly follow the context – her husband (God) has not died – but it represents, rather, the lonely woman's desolate state and loss of her sons and daughters (cf. v. 16). In the face of this desolation and exile of her children, the faithful mother takes on the role of exhorting them to endure the hardships with patience and trust that God will soon deliver them (4:21–29). At the same time she intercedes before the Father/ Husband on their behalf (4:20, 22). The hope of their salvation is inseparable from the expectation of a return from exile: mother Jerusalem is reassured that her sons will come back to her (4:23, 36–37; 5:5–6) in a glorious eschatological event that recalls some of the key texts of second and third Isaiah: Jerusalem will take off the garment of her sorrow and affliction and "put on forever the beauty of the glory from God" along with "the robe of the righteousness of God" and "the diadem of the glory of the Everlasting" (5:1–2; cf. Isa 52:1; 61:3, 10).[66]

1.3.4 *The Wisdom of Solomon*

Wisdom's divine origin, her female personification, and the love of the righteous for her are themes that continue to be developed in the Wisdom of Solomon, though now marked with a distinctly Hellenistic flavor. Whereas in Proverbs and Sirach Wisdom originated in God but was nonetheless created

64 Infante, *Lo sposo e la sposa*, 63–64 (my translation).

65 Contrast the guilt of Jerusalem and her responsibility for the exile in Lam 1:8, 9, 14, 18.

66 Cf. *Pss. Sol.* 11 for a number of close similarities with Bar 4:36–5:8.

by Him, here she is for all intents and purposes identified with the deity: She is called "a breath of the power of God, and a pure emanation of the glory of the Almighty . . . a reflection of eternal light, a spotless mirror of the working of God, and an image of his goodness" (7:25–26).[67] The nuptial element also comes out strongly in the book of Wisdom. The author, professing to be Solomon, writes that he "loved her more than health and beauty" (Wis 7:10). In chapter 8, he is so enraptured by Lady Wisdom's beauty that he wishes to marry her: "I loved her and sought her from my youth, and I desired to take her for my bride (νύμφη), and I became a lover of her beauty" (8:2; cf. Cant 1:15). Lady Wisdom shares in the very life of God, or "lives with him" (συμβίωσιν θεοῦ ἔχουσα), and God loves her in return (8:3). The use of the term συμβίωσις clearly implies marital cohabitation, and so Wisdom is truly considered to be God's wife.[68] Thus it is in imitation of God that Solomon also determined to take Lady Wisdom to live with him (8:9; cf. Cant 1:4). We see here the crystallization of her role as mediating figure married to God in the heavenly realm, and at the same time connected with the earthly realm as she invites men to marry her as well: "Intercourse with Sophia thus imitates God's union with her, and is the sage's personal *experience* of the Divine – revelation, salvation and divinization."[69]

1.3.5 *Lady Wisdom and the Song of Songs*

As scholars have pointed out, these nuptial passages reveal a definite affinity between wisdom and *eros* in wisdom literature:[70] the quest for Wisdom is a quest for the beloved, and the pursuit of Lady Wisdom is described with the language and imagery of love: Wisdom is "found" (Prov 3:13; 8:17, 35) just as one "finds" a good wife (Prov 18:22; 31:10), and the author of Proverbs uses the same language to indicate that both are the way to obtain favor from the Lord:

> For he who finds me [wisdom] finds life, and obtains favor from the Lord. (Prov 8:35)

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67 On the cosmological role of Wisdom in Wis. Sol., cf. Collins, *Jewish Wisdom in the Hellenistic Age*, 196–221.

68 Philo also identifies God as the husband of Wisdom; cf. below, p. 101 and Patai, *The Hebrew Goddess*, 98.

69 Horsley, "Spiritual Marriage with Sophia," 34.

70 On the correlations between wisdom and *eros* / the Song of Songs, cf. Murphy, *The Tree of Life*, 78–79, 106–107; Niccacci, "Wisdom as Woman, Wisdom and Man, Wisdom and God"; Camp, *Wisdom and the Feminine in the Book of Proverbs*, 99–103; Kingsmill, *The Song of Songs and the Eros of God*, 46–74.

> He who finds a wife finds a good thing, and obtains favor from the Lord. (Prov 18:22)[71]

Moreover, the language of love applied to Lady Wisdom finds many parallels in the passionate language of the Song of Songs. Men are advised to love (אהב) and embrace (חבק) Lady Wisdom, just as the Canticle's lover embraces his beloved (Prov 4:6–8, cf. Cant 2:6), and she declares in response: "I love those who love me" (Prov 8:17; cf. Cant 4:9). Wisdom is called "my sister" (Prov 7:4), as is the bride of the Canticle (Cant 4:9–5:1). Ben Sira exhorts his readers to take hold of Wisdom and not to let her go (Sir 6:27), just as the Song's bride will not let go of her lover (Cant 3:4). Also, using the exact same expression, both the pursuer of Wisdom in Sirach and the Song's beloved are said to "peer through her windows" (παρακύπτων διὰ τῶν θυρίδων, Sir 14:23; Cant 2:9). To seek Wisdom is thus a romantic pursuit often framed in the language of the Song of Songs. We will keep this parallelism and nuptial symbolism in mind as we examine the role of Lady Wisdom in Sirach 24 below.

1.3.6 *Lady Wisdom at Four "Moments" of Salvation History*

Lady Wisdom is not just an abstract intelligence or vague presence that extra-temporally floats over creation. According to both Sirach and the Wisdom of Solomon, she is concretely at work in the history of Israel. Sirach 44–50 presents a hall of fame of the great biblical figures who distinguished themselves by their wisdom. From Enoch to Simon the high priest, these men were "leaders of the people in their deliberations and in understanding of learning for the people, wise in their words of instruction" (Sir 44:4).[72] The Wisdom of Solomon (chapters 10–19) also reviews the history of Israel by highlighting Wisdom's activities in history from Adam to the conquest of Canaan. Even more than Ben Sira, the author of Wisdom attributes an active and saving role to Wisdom throughout the events of Israel's history.

Of particular interest to us are the interspersed references throughout wisdom literature witnessing to the presence of Lady Wisdom at four major milestones of Israel's history, which essentially correspond to the same milestones that were seen in the prophetic books:

1. Wisdom present at creation or identified with the Tree of Life in the Garden of Eden;
2. Wisdom as the Torah given at Mt. Sinai;

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71 מָצָא אִשָּׁה מָצָא טוֹב וַיָּפֶק רָצוֹן מֵה' / כִּי מֹצְאִי מָצָא חַיִּים וַיָּפֶק רָצוֹן מֵה'

72 Simon, in fact, is portrayed as no less than an incarnation of wisdom. In Sir 51 he is described in the same terms as Wisdom is described in Sir 24. See below, p. 87.

3. Wisdom as the cloud/divine presence dwelling in the Tabernacle and in the Temple;
4. Wisdom's eschatological destination at the end of days.

These four milestones or "moments" in salvation history underline the interplay between Wisdom's particularism and universalism that were mentioned above. Eden represents the common origin of all mankind. Sinai is the moment of the birth of Israel as a nation and their adoption by God as a "kingdom of priests and holy nation" (Exod 19:6) – later understood as the moment and place of the espousals between God and Israel. The Tabernacle and Temple are the liturgical extension into time of the Sinai theophany and the meeting point between God and Israel, later understood to be God and Israel's nuptial chamber.[73] The eschatological age is the final destination of the course of history and a return to its universal dimension, involving not only Israel but the entire human family. Several passages in Wisdom literature associate Wisdom with these four moments in salvation history:

1.3.6.1 Lady Wisdom at Creation and as the Tree of Life

The wisdom authors believed that Wisdom was present at the moment of the creation of the world.[74] In addition, she is explicitly associated with the Tree of Life of Garden of Eden. In Prov 3:18, Wisdom is called "a Tree of Life to those who take hold of her" (cf. Gen 2:9).[75] Accordingly, the fruit of the righteous man (who pursues Wisdom) is also a Tree of Life (Prov 11:30). The motif of Wisdom as source of life returns frequently, echoing the choice in Eden between the Tree of Life and the Tree of Knowledge whose fruit brought death: He who finds wisdom "finds life," but he who hates her "loves death" (Prov 8:35–36). Lady Wisdom promises to the wise man: "By me your days will be multiplied, and years of life will be added to you" (Prov 9:11). Moreover, the fear of the Lord, known to be the beginning of wisdom, is "health to your flesh" and "strength to your bones" (Prov 3:8), it "prolongs days" (Prov 10:27) and is a "fountain of life" (Prov 14:27; 19:23). The allusion to the Garden and to life continues in Sirach, where Wisdom's blossoms are said to have become "glorious and abundant

73 Cf. below, p. 373.

74 Cf. Prov 8:22–30; Sir 1:4; 24:9; Wis 6:22; 9:9; 10:1 and Niccacci, "Wisdom as Woman, Wisdom and Man, Wisdom and God," 369–74, on Wisdom's role at the beginning of creation as personified "guardian angel" who protected Adam and Eve in the Garden.

75 By contrast, in 1 Enoch 32:3–6 Wisdom is associated with the tree of the knowledge of good and evil from which Adam and Eve ate.

fruit" (Sir 24:17) and she is compared to the four rivers of Eden (Sir 24:25–27).[76] Hence Sirach considers the fear of the Lord to be "the crown of wisdom, making peace and perfect health to flourish" (Sir 1:16). Baruch concurs: in wisdom there is "length of days and life" (Bar 3:14; cf. Bar 4:1).

1.3.6.2 Lady Wisdom as the Torah Given at Sinai

Wisdom is also associated or sometimes literally identified with the Torah and commandments that were given at Mount Sinai. Accordingly, the commandments, like wisdom, are the source of life. Proverbs declares that remembering the Torah and keeping the commandments will grant "length of days and long life" to the wise man (Prov 3:2). In Ben Sira, not only is the Law the source of wisdom (Sir 6:32–37; 15:1; cf. Ps 90:12) and wisdom the fulfillment of the Law (Sir 19:20). Wisdom is in fact the Torah itself, "the book of the covenant of the Most High God, the law which Moses commanded us as an inheritance for the congregations of Jacob" (Sir 24:23). As seen above, Baruch (3:36–4:1) says the same thing in similar terms. Moreover, as Wénin shows in his analysis of Sir 16:26–17:14, Ben Sira seems to view the creation of the world and the giving of the Torah as two sides of the same coin: Within the same pericope he begins with a description of the establishment of the cosmic order (16:26–28), the creation of man (16:29-17-4) and capacity of human understanding (17:6–10) to then immediately describe the divine granting of a "law of life" (νόμον ζωῆς) and the establishment of an "eternal covenant" with men as their eyes saw "his glorious majesty, and their ears heard the glory of his voice" (Sir 17:11–14).[77] The Wisdom of Solomon makes a comparable association between the pre-existent Wisdom, Torah and (eternal) life: One passage describes in logical progression how an initial desire for instruction as an expression of love for wisdom is translated into a practical keeping of her laws, which leads in turn to immortality and thus to the presence of God and his kingdom:

> The beginning of wisdom is the most sincere desire for instruction, and concern for instruction is love of her, and love of her is the keeping of her laws, and giving heed to her laws is assurance of immortality, and immortality brings one near to God; so the desire for wisdom leads to a kingdom. (Wis 6:17–20)

76 Other associations between Lady Wisdom and the Garden of Eden in Sir 24 will be studied below in chapter 2.

77 Wénin, André. "De la création à l'alliance sinaïtique: La logique de Si 16, 26-17, 14."

1.3.6.3 Lady Wisdom in the Tabernacle and Temple

The wisdom writers viewed the desert Tabernacle and Jerusalem Temple as the privileged places of God's encounter with Israel throughout the nation's history – an encounter initiated at Sinai and perpetually expressed liturgically through sacrificial worship. In the books of Sirach and Wisdom, Lady Wisdom is also connected with the Tabernacle and Temple. She "ministered" before God in the holy Tabernacle and found a "resting place" in Zion – presumably in the sanctuary of the Temple (Sir 24:10–11). Since the Temple was Wisdom's resting place, Ben Sira sought her and asked for her before the Temple (Sir 51:14). In the Wisdom of Solomon, Wisdom sits by God's throne (Wis 9:4), and Solomon asks God to send her down to earth so that she can assist him in the work of building the Temple (Wis 9:8–10).

1.3.6.4 Lady Wisdom in the Eschatological Age

Wisdom is also oriented towards the future. Since she is eternal, "established from everlasting" (Prov 8:23) and sits by God's throne (Wis 9:4), she is expected to be present at the end of human history. As we have seen, Baruch identifies her with "the law that endures forever" (Bar 4:1). Sirach affirms that she established an eternal foundation among men (Sir 1:13), and she announces: "for eternity I shall not cease to exist" (24:9). Although evidence pointing to the presence of Lady Wisdom at the end of days is not as common as the previous three moments, the imagery used to describe her in Sirach 24 reveals many parallels between her presence and the eschatological vision of the messianic age described by the prophets (see below, chapter 2).

1.3.7 *Summary: Lady Wisdom in Wisdom Literature*

The nuptial metaphor undergoes a considerable development and transformation between the OT prophets and wisdom literature. Firstly, whereas for the prophets the bridegroom is always God and the bride is Israel/Jerusalem, in the wisdom books God no longer plays a direct active role in the divine-human marriage, but rather communes with men via the mediating surrogate figure of Lady Wisdom. Secondly, the divine-human marriage undergoes a sort of "gender reversal": while in the prophets the divine figure is male and the human figure is female, in wisdom literature the quasi-divine figure, Lady Wisdom is female and the human protagonists are males. Thirdly, whereas for the prophets the human party is generally the collective figure of personified Israel/Jerusalem/Zion,[78] Wisdom literature is characterized by the primacy

78 Although this begins to change in second and third Isaiah with the emerging distinction between Zion the mother and her children; cf. Isa 50:1.

of the individual, where every person is invited to "marry" Lady Wisdom. Fourthly, the historical aspect of the nuptial symbolism in the prophets and in wisdom literature reveals continuity but also development with respect to our four "moments" of salvation history: Whereas the links between the prophetic nuptial passages and the creation/Eden narratives are undeniably present but still rather vague and infrequent, the association between Lady Wisdom and creation/Eden is much bolder through the presence of Wisdom at the time of creation, her active participation in it, and her explicit identification with the Tree of Life. The same goes for the Exodus/Sinai narrative: while our four prophets all associate the beginning of the nuptial relationship between God and Israel with the time of the desert wanderings, no precise moment nor details about this nuptial event are mentioned. By contrast, the explicit identification of Lady Wisdom with the Torah in Baruch and Sirach imply that Lady Wisdom came down and "embraced" Israel for the first time at the covenantal moment of the Sinai theophany. The association between nuptial symbolism and Temple worship also develops considerably: whereas in the prophets the relationship between nuptial imagery and sacrificial worship is usually highlighted negatively by means of Israel's adulterous/idolatrous violations of the covenant, in Ben Sira and in the Wisdom of Solomon Lady Wisdom explicitly dwells in the sanctuary of the Tabernacle/Temple and it is there that men may find her. Thus there is a shift of focus from the *altar* as place of sacrifices polluted by Israel's illicit cult, to the *sanctuary* as dwelling place of God. The only moment of the nuptial metaphor that does not undergo any significant development in Wisdom literature is its eschatological dimension, which is rather neglected compared to the optimistic hope for the fulfillment of the eschatological marriage between God and Israel found in second and third Isaiah. Finally, the fifth significant point of development in wisdom literature is seen in the "substance" of the nuptial union: whereas the marriage between God and Israel in the prophets remains at the level of mere metaphor and allegory depicting the covenantal bond between God and Israel, with no hint of real mystical or ontological union between them, Lady Wisdom's "real presence" on earth and in the Temple, her association with the bride of the Song of Songs, and her very suggestive invitations to "eat," "drink" and "live" with her seem to imply a move towards a real, substantial and mystical transformative union with her that goes beyond mere symbolical allegory. I will continue the study of Lady Wisdom in chapter 2, considering how according to Sirach 24 she enters into a nuptial union with men at our four key "moments" of Israel's history, expressed through a rich array of biblical images and metaphors.

1.4 Aims of the Present Study: Exploring Four "Nuptial Moments"

This initial overview has enabled us to discern a certain thematic convergence in the historical treatment of the nuptial metaphor in the OT prophets and in wisdom literature, preparing the way for a more thorough study of its development in Ben Sira, in the NT, in selected pseudepigraphical and apocryphal texts, and in the early rabbinic exegesis of the Song of Songs. In Jewish sources the nuptial allegory is very often set within the context of salvation history, referring to creation/Eden as the ideal prototype of the marriage between God and Israel, grounded in the one-time redemptive event of the Exodus and Sinai, liturgically actualized over time in the Tabernacle or Temple worship, and tending towards an eschatological fulfillment at the end of time in the Messianic Age. Likewise, as it will be demonstrated below, one can discern a similar pattern in NT nuptial symbolism:

1. The marriage between Christ and the Church is often related to Adam-Eve typology;
2. It is rooted in Christ's redemptive paschal sacrifice;
3. It is applied to the life of the believer (or of the collective Church) through Temple and sacrificial typology and actuated through the sacraments of Baptism and the Eucharist;
4. It awaits its full consummation in eternity.

This enables us to sketch out the aims of our study, raising the following observations and questions pertaining to our four "nuptial moments" that we will seek to answer:

1.4.1 *Nuptial Symbolism and Garden of Eden*

In early Jewish texts, the love between God and Israel is often associated with the Garden of Eden. In the NT, nuptial passages are associated with Adam/Eve typology, referring to the original order of creation, to the damage caused by Adam's sin, and to how it was repaired by Christ, the new Adam. Though the emphasis is primarily situational/geographical in the Jewish sources (the Garden) and anthropological in the NT (Adam/Eve), the two themes refer to the same Edenic tradition of an ideal, primeval *Urzeit* and first marriage of creation, followed by rupture and disorder. Was the marriage between Christ (the new Adam) and the Church (the new Eve) intended by the NT authors to depict a restoration of humanity to the primeval state of Eden? How might this relate to similar ideas in early Judaism? What is the significance of the Garden

of Eden/Song of Songs associative tradition? What inspired and influenced the NT connection between Adam/Eve/Eden and nuptiality, and can we discern any intertextual relation between this connection and early Jewish texts?

1.4.2 *Betrothal at the Time of the Exodus and at Sinai*

For both Jews and Christians the marriage between God and His people was thought to have been sealed by a single momentous redemptive event: In early Jewish tradition, the time of the *Exodus* (with a particular emphasis on the crossing of the Red Sea and the Sinai theophany in rabbinic literature) is considered to be the moment of the betrothal or wedding between God and Israel. In the NT, the key redemptive event for the nuptial covenant is Jesus' *sacrificial paschal mystery*, itself inspired by the Passover and Exodus narrative. Apart from the well-known links between these OT and NT redemptive events, are any nuptial connections discernable between them? Moreover, are there any nuptial connections between Sinai and Eden in early Jewish literature, and any evidence of these connections in the NT?

1.4.3 *Nuptial Union in the Temple*

Following its establishment by means of a single redemptive event (of relatively short duration), nuptial symbolism is perpetuated in the history of God's people through liturgical worship. In early Jewish literature the marriage bond between God and Israel formed at Sinai is subsequently reenacted throughout the nation's history in the desert Tabernacle and Jerusalem Temple, while in the NT the marriage between Christ and the Church (or Christ and the soul) is related to Temple and sacrificial typology and actuated through the sacraments of Baptism and the Eucharist (as we shall see). In both traditions, the Temple – be it physical or spiritual – is thus seen as the liturgical extension, commemoration and actualization over time of the original nuptial covenant (sealed at either Sinai or Golgotha) between God and His beloved bride-people. At the same time, the Temple is the place of anticipation of the eschatological consummation of the sacred marriage. An understanding of the role of the Temple as locus of the mystical marriage in ancient Israel could thus help us to better understand the mystagogy of the New Testament's nuptial symbolism. In other words, the way by which the marriage between God and Israel was thought to take place in the Temple may shed light on how the mystical marriage between Christ and the Church (or the soul) was believed to be experienced through the liturgical rites of Baptism and the Eucharist. I propose to investigate the following motifs related to nuptial imagery and the Temple:

a) *Tabernacle and Temple as nuptial chamber*: As the temples of many ancient people, the Temple (and especially the Holy of Holies) was symbolically portrayed as a nuptial chamber or couch. How is this image represented throughout the various sources, and what is its meaning and symbolism?[79]

b) *Tabernacle/Temple as perpetual liturgical actualization of Sinai*. Both the Tabernacle and Temple served to perpetuate the Sinai theophany among the people of Israel.[80]

c) *The Temple as microcosm*: The Jerusalem Temple was imbued with cosmic symbolism and was considered to be a microcosm representing the entire universe. Also worth considering is the ancient idea of *man* as microcosm and temple, as precursor of the NT idea of the believer as Temple of the Holy Spirit and "place" of the nuptial union between the divine and human.[81]

d) *Temple as Garden of Eden*: The Temple service in Jerusalem was considered to be a source of divine, Edenic blessing, fruitfulness and welfare because it was the place of the indwelling *Shekhinah* – of God's presence on earth as source of all blessings.[82]

1.4.4 *Eschatological Fulfillment of the Mystical Marriage*

The last "key moment" of the divine-human marriage is its final, eschatological fulfillment. In ancient Jewish literature, the love between God and Israel awaits its definitive fulfillment at the end of days. In the NT, the marriage between Christ and the Church moves towards its ultimate consummation in the eternal, heavenly Temple. The obvious difference is that whereas the earlier prophetic and later rabbinic traditions generally viewed the eschaton as *earthly*, the Christian texts, by contrast, point to a *heavenly* fulfillment, revealing parallels with early apocalyptic and *merkavah* literature and their mystical glimpses into the glory of the heavenly realms. I will pay close attention to the eschatological orientation of our nuptial texts, whether earthly or heavenly, throughout the course of this study.

79 Cf. section 7.2.3.1 below, p. 373.

80 Cf. section 7.2.3.2 below, p. 374.

81 Cf. section 7.2.3.3 below, p. 377.

82 Cf. section 7.2.3.4 below, p. 382.

1.5 Current State of Research and Originality of the Present Study

Much research has already been carried out on a number of topics directly or indirectly related to the present work, including nuptial symbolism in the OT, in wisdom literature, and in the NT, studies of the Song of Songs and its interpretation (Jewish and Christian), and the use of OT typological motifs (e.g. Adam, Sinai, Temple) in the NT. The originality of the present work lies in its study of the links and inter-relationships between these different strains of biblical traditions in order to understand better the historical dimension of nuptial symbolism in the NT and in early Jewish thought. The proposed approach would hence be:

- An integrative approach by means of its study of several inter-related motifs that are often viewed in isolation from each other;
- A diachronic approach, approaching the nuptial texts of the NT from within the context of the development of Jewish nuptial symbolism, going from the OT prophets to the Targum on Canticles;
- A comparative approach between Jewish and Christian modes of interpretation and understanding of the marriage between God/Christ and His people;
- A non-polemical approach: some past comparative studies on the exegesis on the Song of Songs have highlighted the polemical or apologetical motif between Jewish and Christian exegetes who both claimed the Song of Songs for themselves. While recognizing the value of this research, the present study is not concerned with the apologetic motif between Church Fathers and rabbis but rather focuses on the NT texts as emerging from within their Jewish context and in light of early rabbinic literature, representing oral traditions that perhaps already circulated in the first century.[83]

The originality of the present work will appear more clearly as we survey the current state of research of our topic. Owing to its broadness and the wide range of secondary sources that each covers partial aspects of it, I will only mention the most significant books and articles here in a review that makes no claim at being exhaustive. Neither will I enter into any critique of individual works but rather merely summarize their most salient points and contributions.

83 On the methodological problem of the relationship between the NT texts, early Jewish oral traditions and rabbinic literature, cf. section 1.6.2 below, p. 52.

1.5.1 *Studies in Nuptial Symbolism*

1.5.1.1 Nuptial Symbolism in the OT

I have mentioned how ANDRÉ NEHER ("Le symbolisme conjugal: expression de l'histoire dans l'Ancien Testament," 1954) saw the conjugal symbolism of the prophets as an expression of Israel's history from its mythical origins to the eschatological end.[84] RICHTSJE ABMA (*Bonds of Love: methodic studies of prophetic texts with marriage imagery*, 1999) conducted a synchronic study of some of the major nuptial prophetic texts (Isaiah 50:1–3 and 54:1–10, Hosea 1–3, Jeremiah 2–3). Abma identified five prominent aspects of the biblical marriage imagery: the covenantal engagement of YHWH in His relationship with Israel, the use of anthropomorphic language to express this relationship, the elements of extensiveness in time, intimacy and pleasure in God's love for His people, the claims and promises of this love, and the response that is expected of God's partner in return. Following LUIS ALONSO SCHÖKEL (*I nomi dell'amore*, 1997), RENZO INFANTE (*Lo sposo e la sposa*, 2004) surveyed the symbolical use of marriage in both the OT and NT. Beginning with Hosea, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Zephaniah, he placed some emphasis on the consolation and rehabilitation of Zion in deutero-Isaiah and the splendor of Zion in third Isaiah.

1.5.1.2 Nuptial Symbolism in Wisdom and Second Temple Literature

NICKELSBURG and STONE have dedicated chapter 6 of *Faith and Piety in Early Judaism* (1983) to the topic of "Lady Wisdom and Israel," studying the personification of Lady Wisdom in Job, Proverbs, the apocryphal Psalm 154, Ben Sira, Baruch, the Wisdom of Solomon, 1 Enoch, and Philo. They noted how the national and historical traditions of Israel are reintegrated in post-biblical wisdom literature (in contrast to a lack of emphasis on these traditions in the earlier and more universalistic biblical wisdom books). They also noted how Wisdom is increasingly identified with the Torah in these texts, an association that becomes self-evident in rabbinic literature as Torah "takes on cosmic functions that were previously those of Wisdom" (p. 228). ROLAND MURPHY carried out a similar study of Lady Wisdom on essentially the same texts in chapter 9 of *The Tree of Life* (1990), pointing out connections between pre-existent Wisdom, creation, and the Torah. Focusing on Sirach 24, MAURICE GILBERT ("L'éloge de la Sagesse," 1974) contributed a study on Lady Wisdom's hymn of praise, with a discussion of her role in creation and her relationship with Torah.[85] ALAIN FOURNIER-BIDOZ ("L'arbre et la demeure:

84 Cf. above, p. 4 n. 11.

85 For other studies on Sir 24, cf. below, p. 56 n. 1.

Siracide XXIV 10–17," 1984) saw common motifs between Sir 24 and salvation history. He noted how the wanderings of Lady Wisdom on earth and her indwelling in the Tabernacle in Sirach 24 highlight the cosmic symbolism of the Temple liturgy and evoke the Edenic paradise of rest and lush fertility, with the tree of life standing at its center. A more general and broader work is RAPHAEL PATAI's *The Hebrew Goddess* (1967, 1990), significant not only for Patai's treatment of the cherubim in the Temple according to Philo, Josephus, and rabbinic literature, but also for his analysis of the place of the cherubim within the development of the concept of femininity in the Godhead in ancient Judaism. Originating from the Canaanite Asherah and Astarte, the idea developed into the emergence of the *Shekhinah* as female hypostasis of God, and later took the form of the *Matronit* of the Kabbalah and the Sabbath as virgin, bride, queen and goddess. Also significant is PETER SCHÄFER's *Mirror of His Beauty* (2004) and his extensive survey, as the subtitle indicates, of "Feminine Images of God from the Bible to the Early Kabbalah." Beginning with Lady Wisdom in the Wisdom books, Schäfer studies her development through Philo and the Gnostic texts to the emergence of the *Shekhinah* in rabbinic literature, the Jewish philosophers, and the Bahir, as well as the parallel role of the figure of Mary (who gradually took on the features of biblical Wisdom and the rabbinic *Shekhinah*) in medieval Christianity.

1.5.1.3 Nuptial Symbolism in the New Testament

About 70 years ago, CLAUDE CHAVASSE wrote a comprehensive study of the nuptial motif in early Christianity (The *Bride of Christ*, 1940). Following an overview of OT origins, Chavasse examined the idea of marriage in the gospels, in which he saw the Last Supper as a marriage feast modeled on the Jewish idea of the Passover as nuptial event (p. 60). He continued with Pauline nuptial theology in a chapter entitled "St. Paul and the New Eden," noting that "Paul's whole nuptial thought springs from the story of the first Man and Woman" (p. 74). Following his treatment of nuptiality in the Book of Revelation, Chavasse extended his nuptial study into the first centuries of the Church and beyond, noting the gradual theological shift over time from an ecclesial view of the marriage (between Christ and the Church) to a more mystical view (Christ and the soul) that came to dominate Christian thought in the Middle Ages. I.A. MUIRHEAD followed suit with a short study of NT nuptial imagery ("The Bride of Christ," 1952), touching upon the Apocalypse, Paul, and the synoptics, but making no mention of the Fourth Gospel. RICHARD BATEY ("Paul's Bride Image," 1963) studied Paul's nuptial symbolism in 2 Cor 11:2–3 as a symbol of "realistic eschatology," where the apostle sees himself as a paranymph equivalent to Moses (who negotiated the covenant marriage of Israel to YHWH at

Sinai); and the present time of the Church is likened to the time between the Jewish betrothal and consummation of the marriage that was to follow a year later. Batey also studied the Jewish Gnostic background to Pauline nuptial imagery ("Jewish Gnosticism and the 'Hieros Gamos' of Eph. v. 21–33," 1963), focusing on the connections between the nuptial symbolism of Eph 5 and the Jewish Gnosticism of Justin the Gnostic's book *Baruch*. He followed this with a broader study looking at the Jewish, Hellenistic and Gnostic background of Eph 5 ("The μία σάρξ Union of Christ and the Church," 1966–67). Later, Batey reviewed all the nuptial passages in the NT (*New Testament Nuptial Imagery*, 1971). The same year, J.P. SAMPLEY published a comprehensive study of Eph 5, investigating the materials that influenced its formation, especially Gen 2:24, Lev 19:18, and the *hieros gamos* of God and Israel in the prophets and the Song of Songs (*And the Two Shall Become One Flesh*, 1971). S.F. MILETIC (*"One Flesh": Eph. 5:22–24, 5:31: Marriage and the New Creation*, 1988) approached Eph 5:22–24 from a different angle, arguing that the text is "ultimately rooted in Pauline and Jewish theological reflections about Adam's role in the redemptive process" because of its author's intention to "link Christian marriage to the New Adam and Eve relationship expressed at Eph. 5:31–32" (p. 17).

Others writers have studied the influence of the Canticle on the NT. MICHEL CAMBE ("L'influence du Cantique des Cantiques sur le Nouveau Testament," 1962) argued that the NT authors took over the Jewish allegorical reading of the Canticle and applied it to Christ and the Church. Cambe studied the passages that seem to show the strongest correlation with the Canticle, such as Christ knocking on the door (Rev 3:20/Cant 5:2), the woman clothed with the sun as figure of the Church (Rev 12:1 – Cant 6:10), the voice of the bridegroom (John 3:29/Cant 8:13), the king anointed with nard (John 12:3/Cant 1:12), and the woman looking for her lover at night (John 20:1–18/Cant 3:1–4). JACQUES WINANDY ("Le Cantique des Cantiques et le Nouveau Testament," 1964) carried out a similar study but was more skeptical than Cambe as to the possible influence of the Song on the NT. ANDRÉ FEUILLET's contribution to nuptial studies has been considerable. He has proposed that the Song of Songs' many references to a rich array of biblical traditions indicates that it may have been *originally* written as an allegory representing the love between God and Israel ("Le Cantique des Cantiques et la tradition biblique," 1952; *Le Cantique des Cantiques: Étude de théologie biblique et réflexions sur une méthode d'exégèse*, 1953). Feuillet followed these early works with more specialized writings dedicated to the nuptial allegory and influence of the Canticle on specific NT texts: the Apocalypse ("Le Cantique des Cantiques et l'Apocalypse," 1975), the synoptics ("Les épousailles messianiques et les références au Cantique des Cantiques dans les Évangiles Synoptiques", 1984), and the Fourth

Gospel ("Les épousailles du Messie – La mère de Jésus et l'Église dans le 4è Évangile," 1986).

Among Johannine nuptial studies, Aristide Serra (*Contributi dell'antica letteratura giudaica per l'esegesi di Giovanni 2, 1–12 e 19, 25–27*, 1977) has gone to some lengths to demonstrate the many parallels between the narrative of the wedding at Cana and the Sinai theophany in light of ancient rabbinic sources. In the work already cited, Infante (*Lo sposo e la sposa*, 2004) also examines nuptial symbolism in the NT and especially in the Johannine writings, paying close attention to its connections with the prophetic literature and to the Song of Songs. His analysis of the nuptial narrative in the Gospel of John, moving from Cana to the Samaritan woman, to Bethany, to the crucifixion and resurrection is particularly well presented, as are the connections he makes between nuptial, cultic and sacrificial elements in the Fourth Gospel.

On the other side of the Atlantic, we note Ann Roberts Winsor's study of allusions to the Song of Songs in the Fourth Gospel (*A King is Bound in the Tresses*, 1999) and Adeline Fehribach's feminist historical-literary analysis of John's female characters (*The Women in the Life of the Bridegroom*, 1998), which sees the entire Johannine narrative as a story moving towards the climax of Jesus' death as a blood sacrifice that establishes a patrilineal kinship group and a messianic wedding giving birth to the children of God. More recently, Jocelyn McWhirter's comprehensive study of the marriage metaphor in the Fourth Gospel (*The Bridegroom Messiah and the People of God*, 2006) pays close attention to the OT background of John's nuptial allusions, especially Jer 33:10–11 (the voice of the bridegroom, cf. John 3:29), Gen 29:1–20 (a betrothal-type scene, cf. John 4), the Song of Songs and Ps 45.

1.5.2 *The Song of Songs and its Interpretation*

1.5.2.1 Modern Commentaries

The Song of Songs and its interpretation throughout the ages has been so extensively researched that even a condensed list of the main books and commentaries on it would be impossibly long. Apart from the works consulted (see bibliography), it will suffice to mention here the most important titles that present an overview of the history of the Canticle's Jewish and Christian interpretation, including the early period which particularly interests us. Though dated, the commentaries of Christian Ginsburg (*Song of Songs*, 1857) and Paul Joüon (*Le Cantique des Cantiques*, 1909) include historical sketches of the exegesis of the Song with overviews of the key features of its rabbinic exegesis that remain useful today. Marvin Pope's commentary in the Anchor Bible series (*Song of Songs*, 1977) remains today the authoritative work on the Canticle, with an extensive section on the history of its interpretation

and a long bibliography. The commentaries of Roland Murphy (*The Song of Songs*, 1990), Tremper Longman iii (*Song of Songs*, 2001) and J. Cheryl Exum (*Song of Songs*, 2005) are shorter but more recent than Pope, providing some updated perspectives. Although mostly focused on the patristic and medieval interpretation of the Song, Ann Matter (*The Voice of My Beloved*, 1990) discusses some general features of the beginning of its allegorical exegesis that are also relevant to our study.

1.5.2.2 Early Jewish Interpretation of the Canticle

Particularly relevant are studies on the early Jewish understanding of the marriage between God and Israel expressed through the allegorical exegesis of the Song, especially those traditions which hold that God betrothed Israel and/or gave them the Song of Songs at Sinai, and those which point to a relationship between the marriage and the Jerusalem Temple.

Saul Lieberman (*Mishnat Shir ha-Shirim*, 1960) noted how the various Tannaitic schools held that the Song of Songs had been "given" to Israel at the Red Sea, at Sinai, in the Tent of Meeting, or in the Temple, while other Tannaitic traditions claimed that God had appeared in His merkavah both at the Sea and at Sinai. Lieberman showed that these Tannaitic midrashim were the context out of which came out the mystical Shiur Qomah and its fantastic measurement of God's form and limbs based on the exegesis of Cant 5:10–15. This led him to see an intrinsic connection between the Song of Songs, the merkavah and the Shiur Qomah. Lieberman's conclusions were disputed by Daniel Boyarin ("שני מבואות למדרש שיר השירים," 1986; "The Song of Songs, Lock or Key: The Holy Song as Mashal," 1990) but followed by Arthur Green, who further explored the Tannaitic connections between the time of the Exodus and the Song of Songs in light of later midrashic texts ("The Children in Egypt and the Theophany at the Sea," 1975), showing that the God whom the Israelites saw at the Red Sea was identified with the handsome young lover of the Canticle.[86] In other works, Green pursued his study of nuptial symbolism in rabbinic and kabbalistic Judaism ("The Song of Songs in Early Jewish Mysticism," 1987; *Keter: The Crown of God in Early Jewish Mysticism*, 1997; "Shekhinah, the Virgin Mary and the Song of Songs," 2002). Gershon Cohen's own study ("The Song of Songs and the Jewish Religious Mentality," 1991), more philosophical than exegetical, argued, like Feuillet, that the *original* meaning of the Song of Songs was probably allegorical. He held that the Song,

86 Green conjectures that the disappearance of God as handsome young man in Judaism inevitably came as a reaction against the claims of Christianity ("The Children in Egypt," 455).

building upon the rich prophetic nuptial tradition that preceded it, was the "ultimate form of theological expression" portraying a unique dialogue of love between God and Israel "comparable to the one moment in the year when the high-priest entered the royal chamber, as it were, the Holy of Holies" (p. 12). Michael L. Satlow ("The Metaphor of Marriage in Early Judaism") also contributed a study of the marriage metaphor in the Bible, Second Temple writings (esp. *Joseph and Aseneth*) and rabbinic literature, concluding, rather oddly after bringing forth many examples of allegorical exegesis of the Song, that the marriage metaphor was in fact ignored in early Judaism more often than it was used (p. 41).

Turning now to research on the Targum of Canticles, Ezra Tsiyon Melamed ("תרגום שיר השירים," 1971) claimed on the basis of the Targum's sources and language that it post-dates the Babylonian Talmud. Joseph Heinemann ("תרגום שיר השירים ומקורותיו," 1971) and Philip S. Alexander ("Tradition and Originality in the Targum of the Song of Songs," 1994) disagreed. Pointing to Melamed's rather static view of rabbinic sources and to the original features of the Targum, they argued that it may in fact have been written earlier than the Talmud and Canticles Rabbah. Frédéric Manns' introduction and translation ("Le Targum du Cantique des Cantiques," 1992) makes a valuable contribution to the discussion on the dating of the Targum. He presents both the arguments in favor of a late dating and those (more numerous) in favor of an early dating, leading him to conclude in favor of a Tannaitic origin for most of the Targum's traditions. Alexander's "The Song of Songs as Historical Allegory" (1996) reviews the later development of the allegorical exegesis of the Canticle, and his introduction and translation (*The Targum of Canticles*, 2003) remains the most complete commentary on the Targum to date. Esther Menn ("Targum of the Song of Songs and the Dynamics of Historical Allegory," 2000) wrote on the targumist's artful way of linking the Song of Songs with the rest of the biblical canon, and on his adoption of the Tannaitic idea that the Canticle was from its very origin an inspired writing depicting the story of Israel's covenantal relationship with God, with a particular emphasis placed on the Garden of Eden, Sinai, and the Temple.

1.5.2.3 Jewish-Christian Polemics on the Exegesis of the Song

Other scholars have written on the polemical nature of the Jewish and Christian commentaries on the Song, where both sides are said to have engaged in an exegetical tug-of-war for the right to be called God's legitimate bride. Raphael Loewe ("Apologetic Motifs in the Targum to the Song of Songs," 1966) saw the Jewish texts as polemical against early Christianity but also against the "physical" representations of the deity of certain streams of

Jewish esoterism such as reflected in the *Shiur Qomah*. Though Loewe supported the later dating of the Targum, he acknowledged that many of its apologetic motifs date back to the time of Origen in the mid-third century. Ephraim Urbach ("The Homiletical Interpretations of the Sages and the Expositions of Origen on Canticles and the Jewish-Christian Disputation," 1971) and Reuven Kimelman ("Rabbi Yohanan and Origen on the Song of Songs: A third-century Jewish-Christian disputation," 1980) continued along the same line, with both citing examples of the disputation between Rabbi Yohanan and Origen.[87] Significant for our purposes, Origen's polemical arguments, if real, would prove that Rabbi Yohanan's sayings as recorded in the sources are truly Tannaitic. Furthermore, Urbach noticed three levels of interpretation in the surviving midrashim on the Canticle, noting how "allegorical interpretations of different types and character commingle in confusion; some comments . . . are of a historical-allegorical nature, others are of a mystical cast, and others, again, are eschatological."[88] Yet no work on the early Jewish exegesis of the Song has yet engaged in a systematic study of these three layers of interpretation and considered whether they really "commingle in confusion" or are perhaps more intentional and meaningful than meets the eye. These studies show that at least some apologetical and polemical element of the Jewish and Christian exegesis of the Song is hardly disputable. Nevertheless, given the long nuptial tradition beginning with the prophets and the existence of a relatively developed nuptial theology of the NT already in the second third of the first century, it also seems certain that the composition of Jewish and Christian exegetical works on the Song from the third to the sixth century did not evolve *only* out of polemical concerns but also flowed naturally from a tradition that was well established by that time.

1.5.3 *Thematic Studies*

When considering the four "key moments" of the nuptial metaphor in the OT and in Jewish literature, the relationship between some of these motifs has

87 Cf. also E.A. Clark, "Origen, the Jews, and the Song of Songs: Allegory and Polemic in Christian Antiquity," in Hagedorn, *Perspectives on the Song of Songs*, 274–93. Urbach's position has recently been criticized as overemphasizing the presence of anti-Christian polemics in rabbinic thought. Cf. Goshen-Gotstein, "Polemo-mania – Methodological Reflections on the Study of the Judeo-Christian Controversy between the Talmudic Sages and Origen over the Interpretation of the Song of Songs;" Irshai, "Ephraim E. Urbach and the Study of Judeo-Christian Dialogue in Late Antiquity – Some Preliminary Observations."

88 Urbach, "The Homiletical Interpretations of the Sages," p. 247.

been studied in a limited way (e.g. the relationship between Sinai and Zion, or between the Temple and the Garden of Eden) – but usually not in their nuptial context. The interrelationship between the Temple and *hieros gamos*, especially in *later* Jewish mysticism, has also been the object of scholarly attention. Yet the early four-fold connection between these motifs – the idea that in early Judaism the Temple was understood to be the sacred place of the divine nuptials between God and his bride, recalling the proto-marriage between Adam and Eve in Eden, actualizing the "betrothal" that had taken place between God and Israel at Sinai, and anticipating the eschatological consummation of the marriage – has not yet been studied in a systematic and comprehensive manner. Likewise, when turning to NT scholarship, the typological reading of these OT themes in the NT is well known, whereby Adam, the Passover, and the Temple are reinterpreted in relation to the person of Christ. But these subjects have usually been studied in relative isolation one from another, and few studies have adequately explored the depth of the inter-relationships between these motifs or their connection with nuptial symbolism. The following are a selection of works that touch upon some of these issues which are relevant to our study.

A number of authors have discussed the close relationship between the Garden of Eden and the Song of Songs. PHYLLIS TRIBLE (*God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality*, 1978) proposed: "Genesis 2–3 is the hermeneutical key with which I unlock this garden [of the Canticle]."[89] If Genesis 2–3 offers no return to the garden of creation, the Song "recovers the love that is bone of bone and flesh of flesh. In other words, the Song of Songs redeems a love story gone awry" (p. 49). FRANCIS LANDY ("The Song of Songs and the Garden of Eden," 1979, and *Paradoxes of Paradise*, 1983) followed in the same vein. He noted as common features the man and woman in the intimate setting of the enclosed garden as a source of delights, the lush vegetation, the surrounding animals and "tree of life," which led him to echo Trible: "thus the Song of Songs inverts the story of the garden of Eden; man rediscovers Paradise" (1979, p. 524). The correlation between Eden and the Canticles was also followed by JILL M. MUNRO (*Spikenard and Saffron: The Imagery of the Song of Songs*, 1995, esp. pp. 102–110) and RICHARD DAVIDSON ("Theology of Sexuality in the Song of Songs: Return to Eden," 1989; *Flame of Yahweh*, 2007, pp. 552–56).

89 Reprinted as "Love's Lyrics Redeemed" in H. Bloom, ed. *The Song of Songs*, 49–66. Cf. also Trible, "Depatriarchalizing in Biblical Interpretation," 42–47; Davidson, "Theology of Sexuality in the Song of Songs: Return to Eden"; Cainion, "An Analogy of the Song of Songs and Genesis Chapters Two and Three."

Numerous studies have been published in recent times on the Temple, shedding light on the thought of the NT authors and their typological projection of the Temple onto the person of Jesus, onto the Church, and onto the believer. Both JEAN DANIÉLOU (*Le signe du Temple ou de la présence de Dieu*, 1942) and YVES CONGAR (*Le Mystère du Temple: L'Économie de la Présence de Dieu à sa Créature de la Genèse à l'Apocalypse*, 1958) approached the Temple from a canonical perspective of salvation history, tracing the theology of the divine presence throughout the Old and New Testaments. Daniélou's work is brief but helpful in highlighting the main stages of development of Temple theology, beginning with the cosmic Temple and then moving through its mosaic, christic, ecclesial, prophetic, mystical, and heavenly manifestations. Congar's more substantial work took the same approach and focused on the divine presence throughout salvation history, approaching the NT through the three distinct manifestations of the Temple: the physical body of Christ, the Christian and the Church as spiritual Temple (Pauline), and the eternal eschatological Temple of the Apocalypse. R.J. MCKELVEY (*The New Temple: The Church in the New Testament*, 1969) expanded upon Congar's study, adding perspectives from the apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha, the DSS, rabbinic and Greek literature on the development of the Temple from physical structure to the idea of the community or individual as Temple.

Others have approached the Temple from a more mythical perspective. Following the lead of RAPHAEL PATAI (*Man and Temple in Ancient Jewish Myth and Ritual*, 1947), scholars have underlined the cosmic symbolism of the Temple as Edenic source of life, blessing and fruitfulness for the whole earth. RACHEL ELIOR ("The Jerusalem Temple: The Representation of the Imperceptible," 2001) highlighted the role of the Temple as a place of memory which represented cosmic order and a "symbol of the archetypal divine order of an ideal mythical past when divine presence and human experience were united" (p. 127). Elior underlined the points of contact between the Garden of Eden and the Holy of Holies in Biblical and Second Temple literature as the place of the *hieros gamos* or mystical union between God and the community of Israel, particularly celebrated on the feast of Shavuot. The union, in turn, became intrinsically related to the heavenly worship described in the *hekhalot* and *merkavah* literature that replaced the earthly Temple service after its destruction (also: "From Earthly Temple to Heavenly Shrines," 1997; *The Three Temples: On the Emergence of Jewish Mysticism*, 2004). MARGARET BARKER carried out a number of similar studies, with an added emphasis on the impact of the Temple on NT theology. Her study on the history and symbolism of the Temple in Jerusalem (*The Gate of Heaven*, 1991) includes a chapter on the Temple as Eden, situated on God's cosmic mountain where He reigned on

His throne. Barker later published a shorter book on Temple symbolism in the New Testament (On *Earth as it is in Heaven*, 1995), and an article on Jewish Temple Paradigms of Christian Worship ("Fragrance in the Making of Sacred Space," 2004), which discusses the role of perfumes, oil and spices as recalling a lost Temple – of Eden, Wisdom and Adam before his fall – invoking the divine presence, and conferring divine state. Jon Levenson (*Sinai and Zion: An Entry into the Jewish Bible*, 1985) focused on the roles of Mt. Sinai and Mt. Zion as two equivalent representations of the Lord's cosmic mountain (with Zion as heir to Sinai) upon which He established and perpetually renewed His (nuptial) covenant with Israel.

What is striking about these Temple studies is that in most cases the nuptial element is either wholly absent or only marginally present, whereas it is the claim of the present study that both motifs were organically and intrinsically related in ancient Jewish thought and in the minds of the NT authors. The dichotomy between these two themes was partially remedied in Eugene Seaich's thorough study on the Temple as symbol of nuptial union between God and His people (*A Great Mystery: The Secret of the Jerusalem Temple*, 2008). Finally, Stephen T. Um (*The Theme of Temple Christology in John's Gospel*, 2006) has studied the theme of Temple Christology in Jesus' dialogue with the Samaritan woman, examining the role of water in the Fourth Gospel and its links with the early Jewish view of water as source of eschatological life (related to Eden, the present age, and the eschatological hope of the prophets).

The picture that emerges from this brief bibliographical survey is the following: scholars have extensively touched upon the many topics that interest us, whether it be nuptial symbolism in the OT, in wisdom literature or in the NT, the Jewish and Christian allegorical exegesis of the Song of Songs, the role of the divine presence and Temple in salvation history, or inter-connections between the Temple and Eden, Sinai, or eschatology. No one, however, has yet studied *together* the different layers of early Jewish and Christian nuptial imagery and their four-fold relation with Eden, Sinai, Zion, and the heavenly Jerusalem.

1.6 General Outline, Sources and Method of Research

Our initial survey of the treatment of the nuptial metaphor in the OT prophets and in wisdom literature has provided us with the necessary background for the rest of our study, which will focus on some of the significant nuptial texts of the Second Temple and rabbinic periods. Methodologically, I will proceed as follows: I will first carry out a synchronic *textual study* of selected texts,

including Sirach 24, Philo's treatment of the cherubim in the Temple, the NT nuptial passages, some pseudepigraphical texts, and selected rabbinic exegesis of the Song of Songs. This will be followed by a diachronic *thematic study* recapitulating the motifs we have observed in our texts and attempting to draw a synthesis of our research.

1.6.1 *Textual/Synchronic Study*

Chapter 2 will be dedicated to "Lady Wisdom's song of praise" in Sirach 24. It may seem disproportionate to dedicate an entire chapter to this relatively short passage (compared to chapter 4 which covers all the NT nuptial texts, chapter 5 which treats of six pseudepigraphical books, and chapter 6 which touches upon a wide span of rabbinic texts). Yet this text is a key to our study because it recapitulates in compact fashion the nuptial and wisdom motifs seen through a rich array of allusions to Eden, Sinai/the Torah, the Tabernacle/Temple, and the eschatological vision of the prophets. In addition to its creative interpretation of OT motifs, Sirach 24 also sheds light upon other Second Temple texts, acting as a bridge between them and the nuptial imagery of the NT. I will proceed with a verse-by-verse exegesis, examining first the question of Lady Wisdom's identity, her origin, and her "location" on earth. The tension inherent between Wisdom's cosmic universality, eternal existence and omnipresence on the one hand, and her dwelling in Israel (especially in the sanctuary) at specific moments of the nation's history will also be considered. From there I will examine Sir 24's imagery of trees, plants and spices, attempting to identify its sources and comparing it to similar imagery found in the Song of Songs, in Eden and Temple traditions of the OT and Second Temple literature, and in the eschatological visions of the prophets. I will then turn to "Lady Wisdom's Banquet" and its relationship to covenantal feasts shared between God and Israel, and to the eschatological banquet of the messianic age. I will then examine Lady Wisdom's identification with the Torah and her association with the four rivers of Eden, as well as the connection of this imagery with the river flowing out of Ezekiel's eschatological Temple. Finally, I will consider the intertextual relationships between Lady Wisdom's hymn (Sir 24) and the narratives of creation (Gen 1), the building of the Tabernacle (Exod 25–31), and the hymn of the high priest (Sir 50).

In chapter 3, I will examine the role of the cherubim in the Garden of Eden and in the Holy of Holies of the Tabernacle and Temple, drawing especially from the writings of Philo of Alexandria, whose allegorical and mystical treatment of the cherubim and of wisdom constitutes an important building block for understanding the nuptial imagery of the NT authors and later Jewish sources. I will pay particular attention to the memory of the cherubim's

passionate embrace in the Holy of Holies as a symbol of God's male-female image, of God's marital love for Israel, and as a paradigm for human marriage.

Chapter 4 will be the core of the work – the study of the NT nuptial texts and their relationship to the motifs of Creation/Eden, Sinai, the Temple, and the Eschaton as typologically reinterpreted by the NT authors. It is widely recognized that three main levels of typology are discernable in the NT: The first is the application of OT types (e.g. bridegroom and temple) to the figure of Jesus. The second is the application of the same OT types (e.g. bride and temple) to the collective Church or to the individual believer. The third level is the eschatological consummation of the marriage between Christ and his ecclesial bride at the end of time.

In order to facilitate the narrative analysis of these levels of typology, instead of approaching the NT books according to their chronological order of composition (Pauline corpus, Synoptics, Johannine corpus), I will approach them rather according to their narrative (and canonical) order (Gospels, Pauline epistles, Revelation).[90] I will begin with two gospels, Matthew and John, which focus on the person of Jesus (Christological typology). In Matthew, this includes Jesus' apparent self-identification as "bridegroom" within the context of the question on fasting, and two eschatological nuptial parables in which he also seems to put himself in the role of the bridegroom. Our study of the Gospel of John will be more comprehensive because of its sustained nuptial, Exodus, and Temple symbolism throughout. I will then consider three Pauline epistles (1 and 2 Corinthians, Ephesians) that touch upon nuptial motifs and OT typology applied to the Church and to the disciple of Christ (ecclesial, anthropological, liturgical and sacramental typology, or mystagogy). Here too I will examine the relationships between Paul's discussion of sexual topics, his view of Christ as the New Adam (and Church as new Eve), his Exodus typology, his Tabernacle/Temple/sacrificial mystagogy applied to the disciple, and his eschatological longing. Finally, I will turn to the Apocalypse, which is chiefly concerned with the eschatological fulfillment of OT types in the heavenly

90 This choice is not only one of narrative convenience. It makes sense to begin with Matthew because, regardless of its final date of redaction, much of its narrative material likely predates the Pauline epistles. For example, it seems obvious that the high Christology and ecclesiology of the epistles presupposes many of the stories on the life and teachings of Jesus as recorded in the synoptics; however, it seems much more tenuous to try to affirm the opposite – that the synoptics presuppose Pauline Christology and ecclesiology. As for treating the Fourth Gospel before the epistles, I grant that this is a chronological anomaly, but I propose that what is lost in historical-critical rigor will be gained in the narrative and logical flow of my study.

and eternal temple of the Apocalypse (anagogical typology) – with also some allusions to Eden and the Exodus.

In chapter 5 I will turn to five apocryphal and pseudepigraphal books that make use of nuptial symbolism. These texts come from very different communities (Jewish and Christian) and are very diverse in their treatment of the marriage theme. The Jewish *Joseph and Aseneth* portrays Joseph's marriage with Aseneth as a kind of sacred and sanctifying union that is perhaps representative of Israel's interaction with pagan nations. Likewise, the Christian *Odes of Solomon* portrays God's impartation of divine life to the believer through a mystical *hieros gamos* with Christ the beloved. *Fourth Ezra*, in addition to witnessing to one of the earliest allegorical interpretations of the Song of Songs, personifies Zion/Jerusalem as a woman, who at first is mourning and then turns glorious. The *Shepherd of Hermas* provides a similar personification of the Church as a woman, and Hermas receives divine graces by means of a spiritual union with twelve virgins. Finally, the *Second Epistle of Clement* identifies Isaiah's formerly barren woman with the Church and expands upon Eph 5's identification of the preexistent Christ and the Church with Adam and Eve.

Chapter 6 will be dedicated to the study of rabbinic literature. I will begin with the study of the main Tannaitic texts that make an allegorical use of the Song of Songs, namely, the *Mekhiltot de Rabbi-Yishmael* and *de-Rabbi Shimon Bar Yohai*, and *Sifre Deuteronomy*. Commenting on the Books of Exodus and Deuteronomy, these halakhic midrashim are by their very nature commentaries on the narrative of the Israelites' journey from Egypt to Canaan (including the Sinai theophany and building of the Tabernacle). The methodology employed will be the following: first, we will identify citations of the Canticle or other nuptial texts in the midrash. Second, we will consider the way by which the nuptial texts are related to the primary verses expounded by the midrash, enabling us to ascertain what parts of the Exodus narrative are given a nuptial meaning through their association with the nuptial verses. Third, we will consider any secondary associations made by the midrash between the primary verse (of the Exodus narrative), the nuptial verse, and references to other periods of Israel's history.

Using essentially the same methodology, I will then consider the treatment of the Song of Songs (and other nuptial allusions) in three Amoraic midrashim: *Genesis Rabbah, Leviticus Rabbah*, and *Pesikta de-Rav Kahana*. These texts cover a wider historical scope than the Tannaitic midrashim: *GenR* expounds upon the story of creation, the pre-history of Israel and the time of the patriarchs; *LevR* refers to the time of the Exodus and especially to the ordinances pertaining to the sacrificial worship in the Tabernacle; PRK covers a

broader scope: as a homiletic midrash on the readings for the feasts and special Sabbaths, it is based on passages from books as diverse as Exod-Lev-Num-Deut, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Hosea and Lamentations, using these as points of departure to comment on Israel's history.[91] I will look for citations of the Canticle or other nuptial verses in these Amoraic texts, determine to which period of Israel's history the primary verse refers and how it attributes a nuptial meaning to this period, and finally examine whether any secondary verses point to other moments of Israel's history.

The methodology will be different for the *Midrash* and *Targum* on the Canticle: since both these texts read the Song as an allegory of the story of God's love for Israel, by their very nature everything in them is charged with nuptial meaning. The procedure with these texts will thus be reversed: we will begin with the nuptial meaning of selected verses and analyse how these are related to the different periods of Israel's history. With *Canticles Rabbah*, this analysis will be complex because of the multiple interpretations and opinions of sages on practically every verse. The study of the *Targum* will be simpler because of its strikingly clear and systematic narrative structure depicting the marriage between God and Israel throughout the nation's history, proceeding verse by verse using the Song as historical allegory.

More than any other chapter, the one on rabbinic literature will show its limitations. The present work is primarily a study of the nuptial NT texts within the context of their Jewish background; it is not intended to make a serious contribution to the study of rabbinic literature, which is not my area of specialization. My goal will be to sketch out the literary framework and development of Jewish ideas and beliefs in the few centuries before and after the composition of the NT documents. Because of space constraints, I will have to leave aside details on the origins, particularities and differences between rabbinical schools, also forsaking major textual considerations and working only with the most established and standard critical texts.

1.6.2 *Thematic/Diachronic Study and Intertextuality*

In chapter 7, I will proceed with a synthetic analysis of the materials studied in the previous chapters, regrouping in a systematic way the motifs related to nuptial symbolism and its "key moments," the interrelationships between them, the developments that these have undergone from Second Temple Literature to the Targum, and the place of NT theology within this

91 PRK has five chapters in common with *LevR*. Cf. Strack/Stemberger, *Intro. to the Talmud and Midrash*, 315, 320.

development. This chapter, which will be thematic and diachronic, will follow the structure and questions that were raised in sections 1.4.1–1.4.4 above.

The comparative and diachronic study of early Jewish/Christian mystical thought on the mystical marriage and the allegorical interpretation of the Song of Songs is a rather broad macro-analysis that will necessarily involve a methodological difficulty. Tracing the development of nuptial imagery from Second Temple literature up to the Targum and situating the NT's nuptial theology within this process will inevitably raise problems of intertextual relationships between documents of different periods. For example, there is the well-known problem of dating rabbinic sources and establishing their relationship (if any) with the NT texts. Three main scenarios are possible in this regard:

(1) Could the NT marriage between Christ and the Church have evolved directly from the Hebrew Scriptures, independently of any existing Second Temple Jewish traditions, and could the Tannaim have responded to early Christian nuptial theology with their own midrashim on the Canticle? This scenario faces two significant problems: first, it assumes that there was no development of nuptial theology in the Second Temple period – something that Wisdom literature proves false. Second, there is generally little evidence of Jewish-Christian polemic in Tannaitic literature, the competition becoming visible only later in Amoraitic writings.[92] In this respect, it seems unlikely that the Tannaitic nuptial symbolism would have emerged *primarily* in reaction to the early Christian nuptial theology that preceded it.

(2) Perhaps both the NT authors and the Tannaim developed their own interpretations of the Song and nuptial theology on the basis of the OT and its thematic development in the Second Temple Period, largely *independently of each other*. It is theoretically possible that the NT authors could have innovated with their own theology of the mystical marriage independently of any extra-biblical Jewish sources or traditions. Yet a total vacuum of Jewish interpretation on the Song of Songs and a complete absence of conceptual development of nuptial imagery from the OT prophets to the writing of the NT documents is improbable, especially given the nuptial motifs found in the wisdom literature and the known existence of the many Tannaitic midrashim on the Canticle that circulated a brief time after the composition of the NT.

92 One possible Tannaitic exception to this rule is found in *Mekh BaHodesh* 5 (Laut. II:231–32), where the dual description of God as "mighty hero doing battle" at the Red Sea and as "old man full of mercy" at Sinai is followed by a lengthy *apologia* insisting that these are two manifestations of the same deity and not, as the nations of the world and heretics claim, "an excuse for saying that there are two Powers."

(3) Did the NT authors rely on existing Second Temple Literature or primitive versions of midrashim on the Song of Songs (later preserved in Tannaitic and Amoraitic literature) to build their nuptial theology? Oral traditions of allegorical midrashim on the Song of Songs could have circulated already before the common era, and both the NT writers and the Tannaim could have used them and taken them in different directions.

If the third scenario seems to me the most plausible, *I do not presuppose it in any way*. In fact, the proper study of the intertextual relationship between NT and rabbinic texts largely falls outside the scope of the present study. While I might propose some parallels in specific instances if they seem convincing, *the two corpuses will be studied independently with no general assumptions made on the possible influence of later rabbinic texts upon the* NT *corpus*.

1.6.3 *From Texts to Theology: Narrative Analysis and Canonical Approach*

Our study will thus combine a number of synchronic textual analyses, looking at each literary unit in itself, with a broader diachronic synthesis tracing the development of common ideas in different sources written over a long period of time. I will adopt this approach in the study of the NT in chapter 4: after investigating the nuptial symbolism of each NT document, I will attempt to sketch out the overall theological trend that emerges in the NT as a whole. The textual analysis will therefore be followed by a canonical approach to the NT, approaching it in its final, received form in order to ascertain how early Christian communities could have understood the mystical marriage as it appears in the NT corpus.[93] Likewise, in our study of Jewish sources, the synchronic textual studies of Ben Sira (chapter 2), Philo (chapter 3), Pseudepigraphical texts (chapter 5) and rabbinic sources (chapter 6) will be followed by a diachronic and thematic synthesis of the major motifs in these sources (chapter 7). This two-tiered approach will enable us to avoid the two opposite pitfalls of harmonization and of a hermeneutic of suspicion. While

93 An increasing number of scholars have recently argued in favor of the validity of the canonical method as a counter-balance to some excesses of historical-critical research that have led to an exaggerated fragmentation of the biblical texts. Brevard S. Childs, in *The New Testament as Canon* (41–43), has challenged the commonly accepted critical method "which assumed that the biblical text must be first put through a critical sifting to determine dating, author, levels of composition and historical referent before it could be correctly understood." He suggests that "only by beginning with the final form can the peculiar features of a passage's intertextuality be discerned which is blurred if one first feels constrained to force the text through a critical sieve."

thematic and diachronic studies are liable to fall into the former by an overzealous connecting of motifs found in texts from different periods, strictly textual studies, on the other hand, are particularly prone to the latter and to "missing the forest" because of an excessive scrutiny of the trees. These two problems will hopefully be avoided by the combination of synchronic/textual and diachronic/thematic approaches. In other words, the methodology that I propose is not a hyper-critical one which only aims at dissecting texts and distinguishing separate layers of tradition and competing schools of thought in the various documents, but rather an integrative one that keeps in mind the method of associative thinking and reliance upon oral tradition that characterized ancient Jews and Christians. This will hopefully help us to understand better how the NT typological reinterpretation of OT and Second Temple Jewish nuptial imagery[94] could have developed into the thematic "raw material" later used by the Church Fathers to build their Christian theology of the marriage between Christ and the Church.

94 Our approach to the OT will also be canonical, reading the texts as much as possible as they would have been understood by Jews and Christians in the late Second Temple period. Since we are primarily concerned with the *narrative* of the OT and its interpretation at the dawn of the Christian era, we will generally not be concerned about the historicity of events or with the processes and hypothetical sources that led to the formation of the final texts.

CHAPTER 2

Lady Wisdom's Hymn of Praise (Ben Sira 24)

2.1 Ben Sira: Introduction

Lady Wisdom's song of praise in chapter 24 of Ben Sira[1] is not only the "centerpiece of the book," as some have claimed,[2] but also a text of great interest for our study because of its marked nuptial character: the poem, permeated with allusions to the Song of Songs, describes a personified Lady Wisdom who seductively invites men to join themselves to her in an intimate communion where they "eat" and "drink" her (vv. 19–21). In accordance with the predominant tendency of Wisdom literature, and in contrast to the OT prophets and later rabbinic literature, this nuptial symbolism is characterized by the quasi-divine figure of Wisdom taking on the feminine role, and the human partner playing the part of the male.[3] In addition to its many nuptial allusions, the text, by means of a rich biblical imagery, depicts Lady Wisdom as active throughout Israel's history and especially present in Eden, at Sinai, in the Temple, and at the end of days. Our goal will be, on the one hand, to identify the nuptial elements and parallels between Lady Wisdom's self-description and the Song of Songs, and on the other hand to see how Ben Sira makes elaborate use of biblical traditions and imagery to situate Lady Wisdom at our four "moments" of salvation history. I will proceed with a verse by verse exegesis of Sirach 24, divided into its main sections:

1 For general introductions on Ben Sira, see above, p. 26, n. 59. Studies on Sir 24 include Marböck, *Weisheit im Wandel* (1971), 34–96; Rickenbacher, *Weisheitsperikopen bei Ben Sira* (1973), 111–72; Gilbert, "L'éloge de la Sagesse" (1974); Sheppard, *Wisdom as a Hermeneutical Construct* (1980), 19–71; Collins, *Jewish Wisdom in the Hellenistic Age* (1997), 49–58; Fletcher-Louis, Crispin H.T. "The Cosmology of P and Theological Anthropology in the Wisdom of Jesus Ben Sira" (2005); Sinnott, *The Personification of Wisdom* (2005), 110–141; Witherington, *Jesus the Sage*, 92–99. Since the Hebrew text of Sir 24 has not been recovered, our analysis will be predominantly based on the LXX, with some references to Skehan's proposed reconstruction of the Hebrew ("Structures in Poems on Wisdom: Proverbs 8 and Sirach 24," 374f.). On the textual state of Sirach, cf. Skehan/Di Lella, *The Wisdom of Ben Sira*, 51–62.

2 Cf. Rickenbacher, *Weisheitsperikopen*, 132; Collins, *Jewish Wisdom*, 49.

3 On the female identity and traits of Lady Wisdom in Sirach and in other wisdom books, cf. above, pp. 23–25.

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- Lady Wisdom's Origin and Universality (vv. 1–7)
- Lady Wisdom's Indwelling in Israel (vv. 8–12)
- Lady Wisdom, Trees and Spices (vv. 13–17)
- Lady Wisdom's Banquet (vv. 19–22)
- Lady Wisdom as the Torah Personified (vv. 23–34)

2.2 Lady Wisdom's Origin and Universality (vv. 1–7)

The poem's first two verses are an introduction (in the third person) to Lady Wisdom's song, announcing that she will "praise herself" (literally: praise "her soul" – ψυχὴν αὐτῆς) and "glory in the midst of her people." Verse 2 adds: "in the assembly of the Most High she will open her mouth, and in the presence of his host she will glory." The personal character of Lady Wisdom, well anchored in the earlier Wisdom tradition (especially Proverbs 8–9), is thus established at the outset through this anthropomorphic metaphor of her praising herself, opening her mouth to speak (cf. Prov 8:6–8), and glorying among "her people" and the "assembly of the Most High." Who are the people among whom she glories? The assembly of the Most High and "his host" (δυνάμεως αὐτοῦ) are no doubt the angelic attendants at God's throne, but the identity of "her people" is not clear. This could be a mere parallelism referring to the same heavenly assembly, but given the context of vv. 8–12 it more likely refers to the people of Israel.[4]

Wisdom begins her song of praise (in the first person) in verse 3. In verses 3–7 she discloses her origin in God and her universality. She "came forth from the mouth of the Most High, and covered the earth like a mist" (v. 3). Her origin from God's mouth suggests an identification with God's *word*, originally associated with prophecy (cf. Isa 45:23; 48:3; 55:11) and later developing into the Philonic and Johannine *Logos* (cf. John 1:1–3). Since we are told a few verses later that God created Wisdom "from eternity, in the beginning" (cf. v. 9), we know that she was present at the time of creation.[5] The scene with "mist" (ὁμίχλη) covering the earth is reminiscent of the dark chaos that reigned at the beginning of creation when "the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the

4 For the different opinions on the localization of Wisdom and the identity of her people, cf. Gilbert, "L'éloge de la Sagesse," 330; Skehan and Di Lella, *The Wisdom of Ben Sira*, 331; Sinnott, *The Personification of Wisdom*, 120.

5 Cf. Prov 8:22–31. On Wisdom's role in creation cf. Rogers, "Wisdom and Creation in Sirach 24"; Gilbert, "Ben Sira, Reader of Genesis 1–11," esp. 93–94.

waters" (Gen 1:2) and God's word, indeed "coming out of his mouth," brought the universe into being (Gen 1:3).[6]

At that time, Wisdom dwelt (κατεσκήνωσα) in "high places" (Sir 24:4). Do these high places refer to heaven or to an earthly elevation? From the immediate context concerned with her divine origins, one would think that Wisdom's dwelling is in heaven. But the "high places" could also be inspired by Prov 8:2, where we are told that Wisdom "takes her stand on the top of the high hill." This is no doubt a reference to the mountain of the Lord, the "holy hill of Zion" (Ps 2:6; 24:3) identified as Jerusalem in the Psalms and prophets (cf. Ps 48:1–2; Isa 2:2–3; Ezek 20:40) and the place where the Temple stood.[7] Given the central place of the sanctuary and Temple in Sir 24 (esp. vv. 10–11), perhaps Sirach alludes to *both* heavenly and earthly high places, since the Temple on God's holy hill was understood to be a replication of the sanctuary in heaven.[8] Wisdom's throne is located "in a pillar of cloud" (ἐν στύλῳ νεφέλης) which recalls the same στῦλος νεφέλης that led the Israelites through the wilderness and rested above the sanctuary of the Tabernacle and Temple as a sign of God's presence.[9] This would confirm the double location of Wisdom's dwelling, both in heaven and on earth, with the cloud acting as bridge between the two realms.[10]

Verses 5 and 6 underline the cosmic universality of Wisdom, her ancient origins in time and her omnipresence in space and over all creation. She "made the circuit of the vault of heaven" (γῦρον οὐρανοῦ) and "walked in the depths of

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6 Sheppard (*Wisdom as a Hermeneutical Construct*, 22–26) suggests that the Hebrew behind Sirach's ὁμίχλη may be ערפל (a cloudlike darkness), evoking the darkness and hovering Spirit of Gen 1:2, or the אֵד that went up from the earth in Gen 2:6.

7 On the mountain of the Lord, see below, p. 8of.

8 Wisdom 9:8 attests to the tradition that God built "a temple on thy holy mountain, and an altar in the city of thy habitation, a copy of the holy tent which thou didst prepare from the beginning." On Wisdom's location in the heights, cf. Collins, *Jewish Wisdom*, 51; Sheppard, *Wisdom as a Hermeneutical Construct*, 30.

9 Every occurrence of the expression στῦλος [τῆς] νεφέλης in the OT refers to the pillar of cloud that guided the Israelites in the wilderness; cf. Exod 13:21–22; 14:19, 24; 19:9; 33:9–10; 40:34–38; Num 12:5; 14:14; Deut 31:15; Neh 9:12, 19; Ps 98:7. According to Philo, the cloud "gently showers down wisdom on the minds which study virtue" (*Quis. rer. div. heres.* 42) (Skehan/Di Lella, *The Wisdom of Ben Sira*, 332).

10 The idea of Wisdom sitting by God's throne in heaven and coming down to earth, and her identification with the cloud are also taken up in the Wisdom of Solomon: In Wis 10:17–19 it is Wisdom herself who led the Israelites out of Egypt, having become "a shelter to them by day and a starry flame through the night." She "brought them over the Red Sea and through deep waters," and she even is the one who drowned the Egyptians.

the abyss" (ἐν βάθει ἀβύσσων). The γῦρος οὐρανοῦ is found in Job 22:14 (חוּג שָׁמַיִם) as the place where God walks, and the ἄβυσσος is the word used in the LXX for the dark תְּהוֹם that prevailed over the formless earth at the beginning of creation (Gen 1:2). Ben Sira also likely has in mind Proverbs 8:24–28, which states that Wisdom was brought forth even before the existence of the תְּהֹמוֹת and was present when the Lord prepared the heavens and "drew a circle on the face of the deep" (חוּג עַל-פְּנֵי תְהוֹם). Not only did Wisdom exist from the beginning: she is also present everywhere, "in the waves of the sea, in the whole earth" (cf. Prov 8:29) and "in every people and nation" (cf. Prov 8:15–16; Ps 24:1–2; 104:2–6). Her total dominion is expressed by four polar dimensions that encompass the entire universe: vertically, the two extremes of the heavens and the abyss, and horizontally, the two elements of the sea and the earth. Nonetheless, despite her omnipresence and cosmic universality she sought a specific place where she could dwell, a "resting place" where she might lodge (v. 7). This paradoxical wish serves as a bridge between the *universalism* of verses 3–6 and the *particularism* of verses 8–12. The tension and paradox between these two poles is remarkable. On the one hand, Lady Wisdom, infinite and eternal, boasts of her absolute rule over the whole universe in time and space. Yet on the other hand, this limitlessness was somehow not satisfying to her, and she desired to make her home among one particular people, limiting herself in a kind of self-contraction or *tzimtzum* bound by the limits of time and space in Israel, and more specifically in the Tabernacle on Mount Zion. In a movement of descent and concentration, Wisdom is on a journey from heaven to earth, from the mouth of God to Israel.[11]

2.3 Lady Wisdom's Indwelling in Israel (vv. 8–12)

Verses 8–17 depict the "earthly adventure" of Wisdom, or how she forsook her heavenly throne to come and dwell on earth in a humble tent. The first part (vv. 8–12) describes how Wisdom "contracted" herself from her universality over all creation and from her eternal existence to the limited realm of Israel. The second part (vv. 13–17) illustrates metaphorically with a rich array of images this sojourn among her people on earth.

11 Compare a similar but less successful journey in 1 Enoch 42:1–2: "Wisdom found no place where she might dwell; then a dwelling-place was assigned her in the heavens. Wisdom went forth to make her dwelling among the children of men, and found no dwelling-place: Wisdom returned to her place, and took her seat among the angels."

In verse 8, God assigns a place for Wisdom's "tent" (σκηνή), commanding her to make her dwelling (κατασκηνόω) in Israel. This is the same verb used in v. 4 to denote Wisdom's dwelling in heaven. The use of σκηνή and κατασκηνόω ("tabernacled," "made a dwelling" or "pitched a tent") clearly evokes the מִשְׁכָּן, the desert Tabernacle in which dwelt what the rabbis would later call God's *Shekhinah* – His visible, localized divine presence among His people on earth (cf. Exod 25:8–9; 33:7–11).[12] Verse 9 briefly interrupts the description of Wisdom's movement through space and turns to the realm of time, stating that with her eternal existence spanning from the beginning to the end of creation, Wisdom's reign over the temporal realm is just as total as over the spatial: "From eternity, in the beginning, he created me, and for eternity I shall not cease to exist" (v. 9). Verse 10 returns to Lady Wisdom's journey and to the conclusion of her process of *tzimtzum* as she settles in the Tabernacle: "In the holy tabernacle (ἐν σκηνῇ ἁγίᾳ) I ministered (ἐλειτούργησα) before him, and so I was established in Zion" (v. 10). Which holy tabernacle is this? The term σκηνή seems to refer to the Tent of Meeting of the Exodus period, but the location of Wisdom's tent in "Israel" and "Zion" points rather to the Tabernacle's earthly successor, the Jerusalem Temple.[13] Yet the mention of Wisdom's eternal existence and her liturgical ministry before the Creator also indicates that the "holy tabernacle" could be the eternal, heavenly sanctuary. Probably the ambiguity and *double entendre* are precisely intended here since the earthly Tabernacle was modeled on the heavenly blueprint that God showed to Moses (cf. Exod 25:8–9). Wisdom thus ministered before God in the heavenly Tabernacle and continued the same liturgical function after she contracted herself to come dwell in Israel's tent.

Following her remarkable self-contraction from heaven's glory to the frail earthly Tabernacle, Wisdom then begins to geographically expand her domain

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12 The Tabernacle is also called "tent of meeting" (אוהל מועד), cf. Exod 25:8–9; 33:7–11. Though the visible, localized presence of God among his people and on earth appears throughout the Scriptures, the word *Shekhinah* itself does not occur in the Bible; it first appears in the *Targum Onkelos*, where it generally denotes manifestations of God as He was perceived by man. E.g. Exod 25:8 ("*Let them make Me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them*.") is rendered by the Targum: "Let them make before Me a Sanctuary that I may let my *Shekhinah* dwell among them." Exod 29:45–46 ("*I will dwell among the children of Israel . . . that I may dwell among them*.") is rendered: "I will let My *Shekhinah* dwell among the Children of Israel . . ." Cf. Patai, *The Hebrew Goddess*, 99.

13 Perhaps the author is referring to the transfer of the Ark of the Covenant to Mount Zion and to the temporary tent that King David erected for it (2 Sam 6:17). On the background of Wisdom's migration to Zion, cf. Sheppard, *Wisdom as a Hermeneutical Construct*, 47–52. On the relationship between Sirach's Wisdom and the Temple, cf. Zsengeller, "Does Wisdom Come from the Temple? Ben Sira's Attitude to the Temple of Jerusalem."

again, stretching out from the sanctuary to Zion and the city of Jerusalem to the whole people and land of Israel.[14] In verse 11, Jerusalem – the "beloved city" – is the "resting place" that Wisdom previously sought (v. 7), which has now become her dominion. Wisdom further spreads out her presence from Jerusalem to all of Israel in verse 12, taking root in "an honored people (λαῷ δεδοξασμένῳ), in the portion of the Lord, who is their inheritance." Could this glory of God's people be a veiled reference to the divine glory (כבוד ה'; ἡ δόξα Κυρίου) that prevailed in the dwelling place of YHWH and was often identified with the pillar of cloud? The glory of the Lord rested on Mount Sinai when Moses mediated the covenant between God and Israel "and the cloud covered it six days" (Exod 24:16–17). It later filled the Tabernacle and Solomon's Temple at the time of their respective dedication, both times filling the holy place with such thickness that it was not possible to enter, let alone to minister in the sanctuary.[15]

The first twelve verses of Sirach 24 thus already situate Lady Wisdom at the beginning of creation, at the time of the Exodus under the form of the pillar of cloud, in the Tabernacle and/or Temple on Mount Zion, and at the end of times. This eternal omnipresence is further developed in the following verses.

2.4 Lady Wisdom, Trees and Spices (vv. 13–17)

Verse 12 announces that Wisdom "took root" (ἐρρίζωσα) in an honored people. Verses 13 to 17 now describe the trees that grew out of this root, with a rich description of lush vegetation and spices evoking not only the flora of the land of Israel but also the language of the Song of Songs and our four nuptial moments of the Garden of Eden, Mount Sinai, the Temple, and the eschatological end of days.[16]

> [13] I grew tall like a cedar (κέδρος) of Lebanon,
> and like a cypress (κυπάρισσος) on the heights of Hermon.
> [14] I grew tall like a palm tree (φοῖνιξ) in Ein-Gedi,
> and like rose plants (φυτὰ ῥόδου) in Jericho;

14 This feeling of expansion is accentuated by the triple repetition of the verb "I grew tall" (ἀνυψώθην) in vv. 13–14. Cf. Gilbert, "L'éloge de la Sagesse," 332.

15 Exod 40:34–35; 1 Kgs 8:10–11; 2 Chr 5:14; 7:1–3; cf. also Lev 9:6, 23; Num 14:21f.; Num 16:19, 42; 20:6. For a more thorough discussion of the כבוד ה', see section 7.1.2 below, p. 362.

16 Cf. Appendix A for a table of the plants and spices of Sirach 24 and how they are related to the Song of Songs, Eden, the Temple and the eschaton.

like a beautiful olive tree (ἐλαία) in the field,
and like a plane tree (πλάτανος) I grew tall [beside the water].[17]
[15] Like cassia (κιννάμωμον) and camel's thorn (ἀσπάλαθος)
I gave forth the aroma of spices (ἀρωμάτων ὀσμὴν),
Like choice myrrh (σμύρνα)
I spread a pleasant odor (εὐωδίαν),
Like galbanum (χαλβάνη), onycha (ὄνυξ), and stacte (στακτὴ),
and like the fragrance of frankincense (λιβάνου ἀτμὶς) in the tabernacle.
[16] Like a terebinth (τερέμινθος) I spread out my branches,
and my branches are glorious and graceful.
[17] Like a vine (ἄμπελος) I caused loveliness to bud,
and my blossoms (τὰ ἄνθη) became glorious and abundant fruit
(καρπὸς δόξης καὶ πλούτου).[18]

2.4.1 *Trees and Spices in the Song of Songs*

Most of Sirach's metaphors of trees and flowers, as well as their respective geographical locations, echo the Canticle's passionate and suggestive language of love.[19] In the Song of Songs, the beams of the lovers' house are made of cedar, their rafters are of fir/cypress (κυπάρισσοι) (Cant 1:17), and Solomon's palanquin is made of wood of Lebanon (3:9). The beloved invites his spouse to come out with him from Lebanon and from the top of Hermon (4:8) (domain of the cypress trees according to Sir 24:13), and the fragrance of her garments is, accordingly, like the fragrance of Lebanon (Cant 4:11). Moreover, the king's countenance is "like Lebanon, excellent as the cedars" (Cant 5:15). In a rather peculiar compliment, his nose is said to stand out "like the tower of Lebanon" (Cant 7:4), and his stature is like a palm tree (7:8–9). Ein Gedi is another common geographical feature between Sirach 24 and the Canticle, with the difference that in Sirach it is associated with palm trees while in the Song it is the place of clusters of henna blooms and vineyards – serving as another description of the beloved by his bride (Cant 1:14; vineyards also in Cant 1:6; 7:8, 12;

17 In the expanded Greek (hereafter GII) and Syriac versions. Cf. Skehan/Di Lella, *The Wisdom of Ben Sira*, 330.

18 GII adds an extra verse: "I am the mother of fair love, of reverence, of knowledge, and of holy hope; To all my children I give to be everlasting: to those named by Him." Cf. Skehan/Di Lella 328.

19 The only exceptions are the olive tree and Jericho, which do not appear in the Song. Kingsmill (*The Song of Songs and the Eros of God*, 50–52) notes that there are 27 words in Sir 24:13–21 that also appear in the LXX of the Song. Cf. Shepperd, *Wisdom as a Hermeneutical Construct*, 53–54. On the Canticle's nature imagery, cf. Munro, *Spikenard and Saffron*, 80–87.

8:11–12). Also noteworthy is Sirach's mention of the terebinth (τερέμινθος/τερέβινθος, 24:16), which may be another sexual innuendo because of the frequent association in Biblical literature of the terebinth (אֵלָה; or oak tree – אַלּוֹן) with cultic prostitution at idol shrines.[20] Lady Wisdom's appearance like "rose plants" (Sir 24:14) and her "blossoms" (ἄνθη) (Sir 24:17) also recall the abundant imagery of flowers in the Song of Songs, where the bride is called "rose of Sharon" (חֲבַצֶּלֶת/ἄνθος) and "lily of the valleys" (שׁוֹשַׁנָּה/κρίνον) (Cant 2:1–2). The lover feeds his flock among the שׁוֹשַׁנִּים (a euphemism associated with the bride's "garden," 2:16; 6:2–3), and so do the bride's two breasts (4:5). The lover's lips are also שׁוֹשַׁנִּים (5:13) and his waist is a heap of wheat set about with lilies (7:2). Lady Wisdom's rich aroma of spices (ἀρωμάτων ὀσμὴν) in Sirach 24:15 also echoes the Song of Songs' smells and fragrances of spices and oils that further accentuate its erotic innuendos.[21] The Canticle opens by immediately mentioning the fragrance of the beloved's good ointments (Cant 1:3, LXX: ἀρώματα). He is to his bride a "bundle" or "mountain" of myrrh and a "hill of frankincense" (1:13; 4:6). His cheeks are "like a bed of spices, banks of scented herbs" and his lips are lilies "dripping liquid myrrh" (5:13). Solomon's couch is also said to be "perfumed with myrrh and frankincense" (3:6). As for the bride, the scent of her perfumes is better than all spices (ἀρώματα, 4:10), and her hands and fingers drip with myrrh (5:5). In the most fragrant passage of all, the bride's "garden" is said to be spiced with

> fragrant henna (כְּפָרִים) with spikenard (נֵרְדְּ/νάρδος), spikenard and saffron (כַּרְכֹּם/κρόκος), calamus (קָנֶה/κάλαμος) and cinnamon (קִנָּמוֹן/κιννάμωμον), with all trees of frankincense (לְבוֹנָה/λίβανος), myrrh (מֹר/σμύρνα) and aloes (אֲהָלוֹת/αλωθ), with all the chief spices (בְּשָׂמִים/μύρων). (Cant 4:13–14)

This passage has three spices in common with Sirach 24 (κιννάμωμον, σμύρνα and λίβανος).[22] In addition, as we will see below, both Sir 24:15 and Cant 4:13–14 are reminiscent of the spices that were found in the Garden of Eden and were

20 The LXX sometimes renders oaks (אֵילִים) as "idols" (εἴδωλά); cf. Isa 1:29–30; 57:5. On cultic role of the terebinth, oak or "green tree", cf. Gen 35:4; Josh 24:26; Jer 2:20; Hos 4:13. Cf. Gilbert, "L'éloge de la Sagesse," 333; Skehan/Di Lella, *The Wisdom of Ben Sira*, 335.

21 Cf. Munro, *Spikenard and Saffron*, 48–52.

22 Smend and Rickenbacher, followed by Gilbert ("L'éloge de la Sagesse," 332) suggest that the rare "camel's thorn"/ ἀσπάλαθος (which does not occur elsewhere in the LXX) should be ὡς κάλαμος (= קָנֶה). Skehan also translates ἀσπάλαθος back to קָנֶה, which would be a fourth spice in common with Cant 4:13–14.

later used in the Tabernacle/Temple as ingredients of the anointing oil and incense, according to Jubilees and the Apocalypse of Moses. In another fragrant nuptial passage, when the lover finally exclaims "I have come to my garden, my sister, my spouse" he metaphorically portrays their union as gathering his myrrh with his spice (Cant 5:1), with his bride adding that he has gone "to the beds of spices" (6:2). The use of spices in a sexual context is also known elsewhere in the Bible: In Psalm 45:8, a royal wedding song, the king's garments are scented with myrrh, aloes and cassia before the daughter of Tyre is brought to him. Similarly, in Prov 7:17, the adulteress entices her prey with a bed perfumed with myrrh, aloes and cinnamon. And in the book of Esther, the young women in Ahasuerus' court prepare themselves for their night with the king with "six months with oil of myrrh, and six months with perfumes and preparations for beautifying women" (Esth 2:12).[23]

One last parallel between Sirach 24's vegetation and the Canticle is seen in that both speak of a budding vine and fruit harvest. In the Song, the beloved goes down to the valley of nuts to see the "fruits (γενήματα) of the valley" and "whether the vine had budded" (Cant 6:11). It almost seems as if Sirach's Lady Wisdom is directly answering his query when she says: "Like a vine I caused loveliness to bud, and my blossoms became glorious and abundant fruit" (Sir 24:17).

2.4.2 *Trees and Spices in Eden*

The imagery of trees, flowers and spices in Sir 24:13–17 also evokes the Edenic paradise: Lady Wisdom, located in Jerusalem, thrives luxuriously like the first garden. Sheppard notes the implications of this imagery: "the city of Jerusalem has been painted as wonderland of Wisdom, a restoration of the Garden of Eden;" to partake of her, therefore, "is to experience paradise."[24] The Genesis 2–3 narrative tells us nearly nothing as to what kinds of trees were in the Garden of Eden. We are only told that "out of the ground the LORD God made every tree grow that is pleasant to the sight and good for food" (Gen 2:9), among which were the Tree of Life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. But the Garden of Eden tradition in Ezekiel 31:8–9 provides more details about Eden's vegetation. Three of the trees there are essentially the same as those in Sirach 24, namely cedars (אֶרֶזִים/κυπάρισσοι), cypress/ fir trees (בְּרוֹשִׁים/

23 Myrrh and aloes are the two spices used to embalm the body of Jesus, the bridegroom-Messiah of the Gospel of John; cf. below, p. 179.

24 Sheppard, *Wisdom as a Hermeneutical Construct*, 52–53.

πίτυες), and plane/chestnut trees (עַרְמֹנִים/ἐλάται).[25] Ezekiel also emphasizes the multitude of branches of the cedar of Lebanon in the garden (representing Assyria) in a way that recalls Sirach's Wisdom spreading out her "glorious and graceful" branches (Sir 24:16; cf. 1:20).

Lady Wisdom's aroma of spices constitutes another significant connection between Sirach 24 and the Garden of Eden. Though there is no evidence for the presence of spices in Eden in the Bible, this ancient tradition is attested elsewhere. The Book of Jubilees relates how Adam, on the day when he was expelled from Eden, brought an offering to God which included three of the seven spices that are associated with Lady Wisdom in Sirach 24:[26]

> And on that day on which Adam went forth from the Garden, he offered as a sweet savour an offering, *frankincense, galbanum, and stacte*, and spices in the morning with the rising of the sun from the day when he covered his shame (Jub. 3:27).

A similar tradition is found in the Apocalypse of Moses, where Adam is granted permission to take spices with him from Eden so that he may offer sacrifices to God at a future time:

> And [Adam] said to [the angels]: "behold, you cast me out. I pray you, allow me to take away fragrant herbs (εὐωδίας) from paradise, so that I may offer an offering to God after I have gone out of paradise that he hear me . . ." And God commanded it to be so for Adam that he might take sweet spices (εὐωδίας ἀρώματα) and seeds for his food. And as the angels let him go he took four kinds: *crocus and nard and calamus and cinnamon*

25 The correspondence is more exact when comparing the trees of Sirach (cedar/κέδρος, cypress/κυπάρισσος, plane tree/πλάτανος) with the MT of Ezekiel than the LXX. The word אֲרָזִים (cedars) was inexactly translated in the LXX as κυπάρισσοι (cypress trees), בְּרוֹשִׁים (cypress trees) became the rare πίτυες (pine trees), and the Hebrew עַרְמֹנִים (plane or chestnut trees) was rendered as ἐλάται (silver fir/pinus picea). The only other occurrence of Sirach 24:14's πλάτανος (plane/chestnut tree) in the LXX is found in Gen 30:37 which is a translation from the Hebrew עַרְמוֹן, thus establishing the correspondence between עַרְמוֹן and ἐλάτη in Ezek 31. ἐλάτη also appears in LXX Cant 5:11.

26 These spices were also used to make the incense of the Tabernacle/Temple service; see below, p. 67. See also 1 Enoch 24–32 for another witness to the presence of spices and fragrances in Eden.

> (κρόκον καὶ νάρδον καὶ κάλαμον καὶ κινάμωμον) and the other seeds for his food: and, after taking these, he went out of paradise.[27]

Cinnamon is another of Wisdom's aromas mentioned in Sirach 24, and all four spices mentioned here also appear in Cant 4:14 (see above).[28] With this Edenic background of trees and spices in mind, no doubt Sirach is also recalling the tradition of Proverbs where Wisdom is called "a Tree of Life to those who take hold of her" (Prov 3:18).[29] Wisdom's life-giving "glorious and abundant fruit" (Sir 24:17) is thus probably intended to be contrasted with the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil which was deceivingly "pleasant to the eyes and a tree desirable to make one wise" (Gen 3:6). Whereas the attractive fruit of Eden deceptively promised wisdom but only brought bitter alienation and death, Wisdom "satisfies men with her fruits; she fills their whole house with desirable goods, and their storehouses with her produce" (Sir 1:14–15). We will return to the topic of Wisdom's fruit below.

2.4.3 *Trees and Spices in the Tabernacle*

It is obviously hard to find evidence of tree, plants and flowers at Mount Sinai and its deserted surroundings.[30] But some of Sirach 24's trees and spices are associated with the Tabernacle, originally built and erected at the base of Mount Sinai. Cedar wood was used for some of the sacrificial rituals (Num 19:6), and branches of palm trees were commanded to be used as an essential element for the celebration of Sukkot (Lev 23:40). Olive oil was used to burn in the menorah of the Tabernacle (Exod 27:20; Lev 24:2); it was also one of the ingredients required to make the oil used to anoint the Tabernacle and Ark of the Covenant (Exod 30:24–25), and it was also offered with sacrifices (Exod 29:2, 40; Lev 2:1–7, 15–16). The menorah in the sanctuary was also beautifully ornamented with flowers (פְּרָחִים, κρίνα = lily?), though we don't know exactly what kind of flowers these were (Exod 25:31–34; 37:19).[31]

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27 *Apoc. Mos.* 29:3–6 (emphasis mine); cf. *Vita Adae Evae* 43:3; Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews*, I:81–82; V:105 n. 96.

28 Calamus and cinnamon were also used for the oil to anoint the Tabernacle and priests (cf. Exod 30:23 and below).

29 Fournier-Bidot believes that the entire description of verses 13–17 describes the growth of the tree of Eden. Cf. "L'arbre et la demeure," 8.

30 The one possible exception is the palm trees of Elim (Exod 15:27), the second stop of the Israelites after crossing the Red Sea, but this location is not necessarily close to Sinai.

31 The rose plants (φυτὰ ῥόδου) of Sirach 24:14 only appear again in Sirach 39:13; 50:8 (ἄνθος ῥόδων) and in Wis 2:8, and not in any of the canonical books of the LXX; the exact Hebrew equivalent is therefore uncertain. The ῥόδον is possibly equivalent to the חֲבַצֶּלֶת, a word

As for the aroma of spices given forth by Wisdom in Sirach 24:15, all of them[32] are known to have served a liturgical purpose in the Tabernacle. Myrrh, cinnamon, cassia, and olive oil[33] were the ingredients of the holy anointing oil used to anoint the Tabernacle, the Ark of the Covenant, the Tabernacle's furnishings, and the priests (Exod 30:23–30). The other four spices mentioned by Sirach – stacte, onycha, galbanum and pure frankincense – were used to make the incense that was offered in the sanctuary (Exod 30:34–36). It is significant that both the holy oil of anointing and the incense were strictly reserved for liturgical purposes. Using them for any kind of profane or secular purpose was severely prohibited, with the attendant penalty of cutting off any offender from his people (Exod 30:31–33). The spice imagery thus confirms not only that Wisdom is present in the tabernacle/temple, but also that she performs a sacred liturgical service in its inner sanctuary (cf. Sir 24:10).

2.4.4 *Trees and Spices in the Jerusalem Temple*

In obvious continuity with the Tabernacle service, the trees and spices of Sirach 24 also have strong associations with the Jerusalem Temple. Four of the trees described in Sir 24:13–17 – cedar, cypress, olive, and palm trees – played an important role in the Temple, being either used as raw material for its construction, employed for its liturgical service, or symbolically represented in the artwork displayed in the sanctuary. Cedar (אֶרֶז/κέδρος), often used as a metaphor for strength and beauty, and cypress (ברוֹשׁ/κυπάρισσος), known for its great height, were the chief woods imported by Hyram of Tyre from Lebanon (1 Kgs 5:6, 8, 10) for the building of the Temple. The house of the Lord was entirely lined with beams and boards of cedar (1 Kgs 6:9, 15, 18, 36), its floor was covered with planks of cypress (1 Kgs 6:14), and the two doors of the sanctuary were also made of cypress wood (1 Kgs 6:34). Both the cherubim (1 Kgs 6:23) and the doors and doorposts of the inner sanctuary (1 Kgs 6:31–33) were made of olive wood. Olive oil was also still used in the same way as it was in the Tabernacle, as fuel for the menorah, as ingredient for the anointing oil, and offered with sacrifices. As for the palm trees, they were artistically carved all over the walls and doors of the inner and outer sanctuaries, along with flowers (πέταλα) and cherubim (1 Kgs 6:29, 32, 35; Ezek 41:20, 25). Palm trees were also

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used interchangeably with שׁוֹשַׁנָּה (κρίνον = lily,). Cf. Cant 2:1 "I am the rose (חֲבַצֶּלֶת /ἄνθος) of Sharon and the lily (שׁוֹשַׁנַּה/κρίνον) of the valleys."

32 Assuming that ἀσπάλαθος is the equivalent of קְנָה. Cf. above, p. 63 n. 22.

33 Along with calamus, not mentioned in Sir 24 but appearing in the Apocalypse of Moses as one of the spices that Adam took with him from Eden.

carved in the carts of bronze of the Temple courtyard (1 Kgs 7:36).[34] The Temple area was also profusely decorated with flowers. As in the Tabernacle, the menorah was ornamented with them (1 Kgs 7:49). The capitals on top of the pillars in the hall were in the shape of lilies (מַעֲשֵׂה שׁוּשַׁן) (1 Kgs 7:19, 22), and the brim of the molten sea of bronze (1 Kgs 7:26, 2 Chr 4:5) was also like a lily blossom (פֶּרַח שׁוֹשַׁנָּה). Finally, the same use of spices as ingredients of the anointing oil and incense in the Tabernacle continued to apply for the Temple service.

2.4.5 *Eschatological Fruitfulness*

Sirach's trees and plants also recall the eschatological vision depicted by some of the prophets, who use similar luscious vegetation to describe the future messianic age and time of redemption. Isaiah, when speaking of deliverance from Babylon, announces that the cypress trees and cedars of Lebanon will rejoice over Israel (Isa 14:8), and "Lebanon shall be turned into a fruitful field" (Isa 29:17) when Israel returns to God. In the future glory of Zion "the glory of Lebanon shall be given to it" (Isa 35:1–2) and "instead of the thorn shall come up the cypress tree" (Isa 55:13). In one rich passage that bears many affinities with the trees of Sirach 24, YHWH proclaims:

> I will plant in the wilderness the cedar (אֶרֶז/κέδρον) and the acacia tree (שִׁטָּה), the myrtle (הֲדַס) and the oil tree (עֵץ שָׁמֶן); I will set in the desert the cypress tree (בְּרוֹשׁ/κυπάρισσον) and the pine (תִּדְהָר/λευκός = plane-tree?) and the box tree (תְּאַשּׁוּר = larch?) together. (Isa 41:19)

In another similar passage, Isaiah adds an explicit mention of the sanctuary:

> The glory of Lebanon shall come to you, the cypress, the pine, and the box tree together, to beautify the place of my sanctuary (Isa 60:13).

One earlier eschatological passage, Hosea 14:5–9, displays so many common features with Sirach 24 that it seems nearly certain that Ben Sira had it in mind as he wrote his text. These five verses alone display no less than 9 common themes found in Sir 24, namely the lily, the roots/trees of Lebanon, branches spreading, the beautiful olive tree, the growing vine, the fragrance of Lebanon,

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34 The psalmists also extend the metaphor of trees to the righteous who, when "planted in the house of the Lord," will "flourish like a palm tree," "grow like a cedar in Lebanon" (Ps 92:12–13; cf. also Ps 1:3), and be like a "green olive tree in the house of the Lord" (Ps 52:8).

the cypress tree, the abundant fruit, and wisdom – themes that are also used metaphorically in the Canticle, as we have seen:

> "I will be like the dew (cf. Cant 5:2) to Israel; He shall grow like the lily (Sir 24:17; 39:14; 50:8; Cant 2:1–2, 16; 4:5; 5:13; 6:2–3; 7:2), and lengthen his roots like Lebanon (Sir 24:13; Cant 1:17; 3:9). His branches shall spread (Sir 24:16); His beauty shall be like an olive tree (Sir 24:14), And his fragrance like Lebanon (Cant 4:11). Those who dwell under his shadow shall return; they shall be revived like grain, and grow like a vine (Sir 24:17; Cant 2:13). Their scent shall be like the wine (Cant 1:2, 4; 4:10) of Lebanon . . . I am like a green cypress tree (Sir 24:13; Cant 1:17); your fruit is found in me (Sir 24:17; Cant 2:3)." Who is wise? (Sir 24:1) Let him understand these things. Who is prudent? Let him know them. (Hos 14:5–9)

Sirach's palm trees are also known in an eschatological context, namely as an important feature of Ezekiel's future Temple.[35] Flowers are also expected to spring forth in Isaiah's future age, when a "branch" (נֵצֶר/ἄνθος) shall grow out of the roots of Jesse (11:1), when "the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose (ὡς κρίνον)" (35:1–2), and "as the earth brings forth its bud (ἄνθος), as the garden causes the things that are sown in it to spring forth, so the Lord GOD will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations" (61:11). The prophets also announce that the messianic age will be like the former Garden of Eden: Isaiah prophesies that the Lord will make Zion's wilderness "like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the Lord" (Isa 51:3), and the righteous will be like "a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters do not fail" (Isa 58:11, cf. also Jer 31:12, Ezek 36:35). If trees and plants are a common feature of the prophetic eschatological visions, the imagery of spices, by contrast, is generally absent from them, except for one passage in Isaiah where it is said that the gentiles will bring frankincense (לְבֹנָה/λίβανος) to Zion and proclaim the praises of the Lord (Isa 60:6).

In summary, Sirach 24's imaginative description of Lady Wisdom is extremely rich in allusions to the Song of Songs, thus affirming Wisdom's role as bride (of God or of Israel). The same imagery also reveals a close association with the Garden of Eden, Mount Sinai (via the Tabernacle), the Temple of Jerusalem, and the end of days announced by the prophets.

35 Cf. Ezek 40:16, 22, 26, 31, 34, 37; 41:18–20, 25–26.

2.5 Excursus: Lady Wisdom's Costly Fruit (v. 17)

In Sirach 24:17, Lady Wisdom declares: "Like a vine I caused loveliness to bud, and my blossoms became glorious and abundant fruit." But what is Wisdom's fruit? Proverbs tells us that Wisdom is more valuable than silver, gold and rubies, and her "fruit" is better than gold, fine gold, and choice silver (Prov 8:10–11, 19). Since she is beyond price, the comparison between Wisdom (or her fruits) and a rich treasure of precious metals and stones is frequently made in Wisdom literature.[36] In a passage that identifies the fruit of wisdom with both material riches and with life, the author of Proverbs tells us that Wisdom's proceeds are:

> better than the profits of silver, and her gain than fine gold (חָרוּץ). She is more precious than rubies (פְּנִינִים), and all the things you may desire cannot compare with her. Length of days is in her right hand, in her left hand riches and honor . . . She is a Tree of Life to those who take hold of her . . . (Prov 3:14–18)

Another even richer passage associating Wisdom with precious metals and jewels is found in Job 28:15–19, where Wisdom is valued higher than gold (זָהָב), silver (כֶּסֶף), gold of Ophir (כֶּתֶם אוֹפִיר), onyx (שֹׁהַם), sapphire (סַפִּיר), glass (זְכוֹכִית), fine gold (פָּז), coral (רָאמוֹת), crystal (גָּבִישׁ), rubies (פְּנִינִים), topaz of Ethiopia (פִּטְדַת-כּוּשׁ), and pure gold (כֶּתֶם טָהוֹר). Although the imagery of precious metals and stones does not appear in Sirach 24, the prominence of this metaphor in other passages of Wisdom literature invite us to examine how these precious metals and stones may be associated with the language of love and with our four "moments" of salvation history.[37]

2.5.1 *Love: More Precious than Rubies and Gold*

Proverbs 31:10 tells us that a good wife is "more precious than rubies (פְּנִינִים)," and Sirach adds that her charm is "worth more than gold" (Sir 7:19). The Song of Songs and other biblical nuptial passages also make copious use of precious metals and stones to describe the beauty of the bridegroom and bride.[38] In the Canticle, the bride is adorned with ornaments of gold and studs of silver (Cant 1:11). Solomon's palanquin has pillars of silver and a support of gold (3:10). The beloved's head is like the finest gold (כֶּתֶם פָּז), his hands are

36 Cf. Prov 2:4; 3:14–15; 8:10–11, 18–19; 16:16; 20:15; Wis 7:8–10; 8:5; Sir 6:30–31; 51:28; Bar 3:30.

37 See Appendix B for a table of the precious metals and jewels and their association with Wisdom, with the Canticle, and with our four "moments" of salvation history.

38 Cf. Munro, *Spikenard and Saffron*, 56–66.

rods of gold (זָהָב) set with beryl (תַּרְשִׁישׁ), his body is inlaid with sapphires (סַפִּירִים), and his legs are set on bases of fine gold (פָּז) (5:11, 14–15). In addition, in the nuptial passage of Ezek 16:13 God decks his beloved Israel with gold and silver after having entered into his marital covenant with her. As seen in Appendix B, however, the correspondence between Wisdom and love remains only partial since a number of precious stones attributed to Wisdom in Job (onyx, glass, coral, crystal, topaz) are not found in the Canticle or in any other biblical nuptial context.

2.5.2 *Precious Stones in Eden*

Both Genesis and Ezekiel bear witness to the presence of precious metals and stones in the Garden of Eden. In Gen 2:11–12 we are told that the land of Havilah – either a part of Eden or a region adjacent to it – was rich in gold, bdellium (בְּדֹלַח) and the onyx stone (אֶבֶן הַשֹּׁהַם). Ezekiel, in his lamentation over the king of Tyre, who was "in Eden, the garden of God," recalls how "every precious stone was [his] covering: the sardius (אֹדֶם), topaz (פִּטְדָה), and diamond (יָהֲלֹם), beryl (תַּרְשִׁישׁ), onyx (שֹׁהַם), and jasper (יָשְׁפֵה), sapphire (סַפִּיר), turquoise (נֹפֶךְ), and emerald with gold (בָּרְקַת וְזָהָב) (Ezek 28:13). A few of the metals and stones found in Ezekiel's Eden are associated with Wisdom in Job 28 (gold, onyx, sapphire and topaz). Some are found in the Canticle (gold, sapphire, beryl). Others, though not associated with Wisdom or the language of love (turquoise, emerald, sardius, diamond, jasper), are associated with the high priest and with the eschatological vision of the book of Revelation (see below).

2.5.3 *At Sinai and in the Tabernacle*

The book of Exodus describes the Sinai theophany as a glorious event. When Moses went up to the top of the Mount with Aaron, Nadab, Abihu and the seventy elders and "saw the God of Israel," "there was under his feet as it were a paved work of sapphire stone, and it was like the very heavens in its clarity (Exod 24:9). Moreover, many of the precious metals and stones of Ezekiel's Eden are the same as those used in the Tabernacle and its service. All of the Tabernacle's major instruments and furnishings were either made of solid gold or overlaid with gold (e.g. Exod 25:3, 11–39), and the Tabernacle's sockets were made of silver (Exod 26:19, 21). Onyx stones were used for the high priest's ephod and breastplate (Exod 25:7; 28:9; 35:9, 27), and four rows of twelve costly stones were fitted onto the breastplate, nine of which correspond to the precious stones found in Ezekiel's Eden (sardius, topaz, emerald, turquoise, sapphire, diamond, beryl, onyx and jasper). Job 28 mentions three of these (topaz, sapphire and onyx), along with gold and silver, to describe the costliness of Wisdom. While the parallel between the precious materials used in the Tabernacle and Job's description of Wisdom is only partial,

the correspondence with the precious metals and jewels of Eden is almost perfect. Ezekiel's Garden of Eden probably intended to evoke the Tabernacle/Temple service and the high priest officiating there.[39]

2.5.4 *Precious Materials in the Temple*

Everything said above about the building materials of the Tabernacle and the costly stones on the high priest's breastplate remained the same in the Temple. According to the book of Kings, silver was not worthy enough a material for it (1 Kgs 10:21) and everything in the Temple was either made of solid gold or overlaid with gold (1 Kgs 6:20–35; 7:48–51), but 1 Chron 29:4 states that seven thousand talents of refined silver were used to overlay the walls of the house.

2.5.5 *Precious Stones at the End of Days*

The prophets also use precious metals and stones to describe the glory of the messianic age (or the divine, heavenly realm). In addition to the abundance of gold and silver expected of an idyllic age (Isa 13:12; 60:6, 9, 17), deutero-Isaiah has God swear to Zion, in a nuptial passage where He is called her "husband" and she is His wife: "I will lay your stones with colorful gems, and lay your foundations with sapphires. I will make your pinnacles of rubies, your gates of crystal, and all your walls of precious stones" (Isa 54:11–12; cf. vv. 5–6). Ezekiel's vision of the divine *Merkavah* suddenly bursting into time and history adds beryl and sapphire (Ezek 1:16, 26). These traditions of precious jewels in the eschaton are best preserved and developed later in John's Apocalypse (Rev 21:18–21), where we see a dazzling display of beauty in the eschatological New Jerusalem. The city and its streets are made of "pure gold, like clear glass," the construction of its wall is of jasper, and the foundations of the wall are adorned with almost all of the aforementioned precious stones of Wisdom in Job 28, the Garden of Eden in Ezek 28 and the breastplate of the high priest in Exod 28 (cf. Appendix B).

In summary, we are able to discern a number of parallels in the biblical authors' use of precious metals and stones to describe Wisdom, the language of love, and the four moments of Eden, Sinai/Tabernacle, the Temple, and the eschaton. The correspondences are partial between Job's Wisdom and the Song of Songs, but very strong between Ezekiel's Eden, the high priest's garments described in Exodus, and the eschatological vision of the book of Revelation.

39 Compare Ezek 28:13 with Exod 28:17–20; cf. Appendix B.

2.6 Lady Wisdom's Banquet (vv. 19–22)

In Sirach 24:19–22, Wisdom invites "those who desire her" to come to a sumptuous banquet to eat their fill of her produce/fruits (γενήματα). This recalls a similar feast in Proverbs 9:1–5, where Wisdom "slaughtered her meat," "mixed her wine," "furnished her table," and invited the simple to come eat her bread and drink of her wine (cf. also Sir 1:14–15; 6:19; 15:2–3). Eating and feasting are frequently associated with erotic love; as the universal sign of covenantal bond, fellowship and communion, they are also activities that took place in Eden, on Mount Sinai, in the Temple, and are expected to continue at the end of days.

2.6.1 *Love Feast*

Just as Lady Wisdom gives food and drink to her followers, so the bride of the Canticle also feeds her beloved and gives him to drink (Cant 5:1; 7:13; 8:2). In Sirach, Wisdom adds: "For the remembrance of me is sweeter than honey (μέλι), and my inheritance sweeter than the honeycomb (μέλιτος κηρίον)" (Sir 24:20). The sweet taste of Lady Wisdom not only echoes Ps 19:10, where the judgments of the Lord are deemed "sweeter than the honey and the honeycomb" (דְּבַשׁ וְנֹפֶת צוּפִים, μέλι καὶ κηρίον),[40] but also once again the Song of Songs: The lips of the Canticle's spouse have the same taste as Wisdom, dripping of honeycomb, with honey and milk under her tongue (4:11). At the climax of the Song, the Shulamite invites her lover to "come to his garden, and eat its choicest fruits" (4:16), and when he does so, he exclaims ecstatically: "I have eaten my honeycomb with my honey" (יָעַרְתִּי עִם-דִּבְשִׁי, LXX: "my bread with my honey," 5:1). Other associations of honey with nuptial or sexual love are found in Ezek 16:13, 19 where God gives honey to his bride Israel as an expression of his love for her, and in Prov 5:3, where the lips of the strange woman drop as a honeycomb. This association will be especially developed in *Joseph and Aseneth*, with the myrrh-smelling honeycomb of honey (κηρίον μέλιτος) made by the "bees of the paradise of delight" that Aseneth is prompted to eat in preparation for her marriage with Joseph (*Jos. Asen.* 16:1–9).[41]

2.6.2 *Feasting in Eden*

Aseneth's honey made by the bees of the "paradise of delight" invites us to consider the traditions of feasting in Eden. The brief description of Eden in Genesis does not explicitly mention any eating in the Garden, but the presence of "every tree that is pleasing to the sight and good for food" (Gen 2:9)

40 Cf. also Ps 119:103; Prov 24:13–14.

41 Cf. below, p. 272.

and the liberal invitation to "freely eat of every tree of the garden" (Gen 2:16) (which did not yet exclude eating from the Tree of Life) assumes that Adam and Eve were in a place of many delights to the palate. 1 Enoch recalls that the Tree of Life had "a fragrant smell more than all fragrant spices" and its fruit was "like bunches of a date palm tree" (1 En. 24:4). In 2 Enoch, the paradise of Eden appears as a place of abundant and exquisite foods, including sweet-smelling fruit from sweet-flowering trees and "foods borne bubbling with fragrant exhalation" (2 En. 8:2), with "produce from all fruits" growing from the tree of life (8:4), and springs of honey, milk, oil and wine (8:5). In the Apocalypse of Moses (6:1–2), Seth recalls the fruits of paradise that his father Adam used to eat, and he proposes to return there to try and bring some of it back. Later, Eve recalls to her son how Adam gathered fragrant herbs and "seeds for his food" just before his expulsion from paradise to ensure his future survival (*Apoc. Mos*. 29:6).

2.6.3 *Covenantal Feast at Sinai*

Given Ben Sira's identification of Lady Wisdom with the Torah (below), her banquet may also allude to the covenantal ceremony and feast celebrated between God and Israel at Sinai, where Moses mediated to the people the ordinances of the Torah (Exod 24:3), the people solemnly vowed their obedience by offering burnt-offerings (עֹלֹת) and peace-offerings (זִבְחֵי שְׁלָמִים) (Exod 24:3–7), and Moses, Aaron, Nadab, Abihu and the seventy elders went up on the mountain where they "beheld God, and they ate and drank" (v. 9). The covenantal ceremony was immediately followed by the coming of the glory of the Lord in the form of the cloud (vv. 15–18). The close intimacy between God and Israel at Sinai (later understood as the forming of the nuptial bond between them) was enacted by the sacrifice of עֹלֹת (signifying complete dedication between the two parties) and the offering and eating of זְבָחִים (signifying intimate communion between them), creating in effect an experience where "man, literally, and God, figuratively, partake of the same feast."[42]

2.6.4 *Partaking of the Sacrifices in the Temple*

The sacrifices instituted at Sinai were perpetuated in the liturgy of the Tabernacle and Temple, which included among its offerings the presentation of loaves and wine (cf. Exod 29:23, 40–41; Lev 23:13). Just as the covenantal

42 Berman, *The Temple*, p. 130. The psalmist attests that the forming of the covenant between God and Israel was accomplished by offering and partaking of a *zevach*: "Gather My saints together unto Me; those that have made a covenant with Me by sacrifice" (כֹּרְתֵי בְרִיתִי עָלֵי-זָבַח) (Ps 50:5). Cf. the discussion below (p. 228) on the role of the זבח as covenantal feast between God and Israel.

eating and drinking on Sinai celebrated the people's bond with YHWH, so the eating of the sacrifices offered in the Temple was a covenantal meal that solemnly ritualized the alliance between them. In other words, communion with God is attained by "eating with Him." In light of Lady Wisdom's liturgical service in the Tabernacle/Temple (Sir 24:10), her invitation to "eat and drink" her likely alludes to the same worship, its communal sacrifices and drink libations, and perhaps also the bread of the presence in the sanctuary. Fletcher-Louis has taken this approach, arguing that the "remembrance" (μνημόσυνόν) of Wisdom (Sir 24:20) precisely points to the Temple's cultic setting: "the memorial of Wisdom is the Israelite cult, since Wisdom's actions in creation (and history) are recorded, rehearsed and engrained upon the people's corporate memory through the structure and drama of the cult."[43]

2.6.5 *Eschatological Banquet*

Abundant covenantal eating and feasting are also an expected vital element of the eschatological age. Isaiah announces that the Lord will offer to all people "a feast of choice pieces, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of well-refined wines on the lees" (Isa 25:6). This idea continues in Deutero-Isaiah, where God establishes his everlasting covenant with Israel on the basis of his former promises to David, also within the context of a sumptuous banquet: "Come, buy and eat. Yes, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price . . . eat what is good, and delight yourselves in fatness . . . and I will make an everlasting covenant with you – the sure mercies of David" (Isa 55:1–3).[44] Jeremiah also envisions the final redemption as a time of abundant feasting when Israel

> shall come and sing aloud on the height of Zion, and they shall be radiant over the goodness of the LORD, over the grain, the wine, and the oil, and over the young of the flock and the herd; their life shall be like a watered garden, and they shall languish no more. (Jer 31:12)

Lady Wisdom's banquet therefore appears to reflect again her mediating role in the love relationship between God and Israel through its affinities with the Song of Songs, the delights of Eden, and the covenantal feasting at Sinai and in the Temple that is ultimately fulfilled in the great eschatological banquet. With

43 Louis-Fletcher, "The Cosmology of P and Theological Anthropology in the Wisdom of Jesus Ben Sira," 93.

44 Cf. also Isa 49:9–10; 62:9; 65:13, 21; Amos 9:14; Joel 2:24, 26; Zech 8:12; 9:17.

verse 22, Wisdom also concludes her speech in the first person, and Ben Sira resumes his narration in the third person in the next verse.

2.7 Lady Wisdom as Torah Personified (vv. 23–34)

Following Lady Wisdom's invitation to her followers that they come to her nuptial/covenantal meal, Ben Sira reveals another facet of her identity in what is perhaps the book's most stunning declaration. Lady Wisdom is the "the book of the covenant of the Most High God, the law which Moses commanded us as an inheritance for the congregations of Jacob" (v. 23).[45] This reference to the βίβλος διαθήκης θεοῦ refers to the Sinai covenant code (cf. Exod 24:7), using an exact quote from Deuteronomy (Deut 33:4; cf. 2 Kgs 23:2; 2 Chr 34:31). Ben Sira thus identifies Lady Wisdom with the Torah, considered to be the ultimate source of wisdom;[46] conversely, wisdom was understood as the necessary quality to keep the law. As Gilbert has noted, Wisdom expresses in her song of praise the essential contents of the Torah, that is, how God created the world and man, how He chose Israel and gave her the Promised Land with at its center the Temple of Jerusalem, where the liturgy to YHWH was celebrated and whence sprung the word of the Lord (cf. Isa 2:4; Mic 4:2).[47] In Sirach, Wisdom is the "fulfillment of the law" (Sir 19:20), and in our present passage she is nothing less than a personal hypostasis of the Torah (cf. Bar 3:37–4:1).[48] This identification of Wisdom with the Torah means that for our author, Wisdom came down and was "given" to Israel at Mount Sinai. At the same time, Wisdom's identification with the Torah considered in light of her presence at the time of creation implies a close relationship between the Torah and creation. Torah-Wisdom may have been given to Israel through Moses at Mount Sinai; but its initial revelation to the world was already implicit in creation itself (cf. Sir 16:24–17:20). And so the Torah is really the supreme actualization of the natural law, the

45 GII adds a verse 24: "Do not grow weary of striving with the Lord's help, but cling to him that he may reinforce you. The Lord Almighty alone is God, and apart from him there is no savior." Cf. Skehan/Di Lella, 329.

46 Cf. Ps 90:12; Sir 6:32–37; 15:1; 1 Chr 22:12; and above, p. 32.

47 Gilbert, "L'éloge de la Sagesse," 337–38.

48 On the identification of Wisdom and Torah in Sirach, cf. Marböck, *Weisheit im Wandel*, 85–96; Reiterer, "The interpretation of the Wisdom tradition of the Torah within Ben Sira;" *ibid.* "Das Verhältnis der חכמה zur תורה im Buch Ben Sira: Kriterien zur gegenseitigen Bestimmung;" Collins, *Jewish Wisdom in the Hellenistic Age*, 54–56.

particular revelation to one people at one moment in time of what had already been universally given to all humanity at the dawn of history.[49] Ben Sira will emphasize this primordial and universal role of Torah-Wisdom through his metaphor of Wisdom as the rivers of Eden.

2.7.1 *Five Rivers and Two Men (vv. 25–29)*

[25] It [the book of the covenant] fills men with wisdom, like the Pishon,
and like the Tigris at the time of the first fruits.
[26] It makes them full of understanding,
like the Euphrates, and like the Jordan at harvest time.
[27] It makes instruction shine forth like light,[50]
like the Gihon at the time of vintage.

Ben Sira now elaborates on how the Torah brims with wisdom by means of an analogy of five rivers. The book of the covenant fills men with wisdom, filling them with understanding, and making instruction shine forth like the Pishon (Φισων), the Tigris (Τίγρις), the Euphrates (Εὐφράτης), the Jordan, and the Gihon (Γηων). Wisdom is frequently compared to a fountain or stream in Wisdom and Second Temple literature: In Proverbs she is called a "fountain of life" (Prov 16:22) and a "gushing stream" (Prov 18:4). Ben Sira writes elsewhere that Solomon, in his great wisdom, "overflowed like a river with understanding" (Sir 47:14). Baruch adds that to turn away from the Torah is to "forsake the fountain of Wisdom" (Bar 3:12; cf. also 4 Ezra 14:47). Four of the five rivers mentioned here are the four riverheads that branched out of the river coming out of Eden to water the garden: the Pishon, the Gihon, the Hiddekel (LXX: Τίγρις), and the Euphrates (Gen 2:10–14). This comparison with the source of paradisal waters is yet another link connecting Wisdom with the original home of Adam

49 Philo (*De op. mundi 3*) expressed the unity between natural and revealed law some two centuries later: "that the cosmos is in harmony with the Law, and the Law with the world, and that the man who observes the law is constituted thereby a loyal citizen of the cosmos, regulating his doings by the purpose and will of Nature, in accordance with which the entire cosmos itself is also administered." Cf. also Rom 1:20. Collins, *Jewish Wisdom in the Hellenistic Age*, 58.

50 The Greek's φῶς is rendered *nhr*' (river = the Nile) in the Syriac. Most commentators think that the Syriac is correct and that the Hebrew behind ὡς φῶς was כיאור which became corrupted as באור, or perhaps כנהר which became בנהרה. Cf. Gilbert, "L'éloge de la Sagesse," 338 n. 37.

and Eve – and thus of mankind.[51] The same Edenic context is maintained in the next verse with the mention of the "first man," and a return to the primordial elements of creation – the sea and the great abyss:

> [28] Just as the first man did not know her perfectly, the last one has not fathomed her;
> [29] for her thought is more abundant than the sea, and her counsel deeper than the great abyss.

These two verses mentioning the first and last man return to the theme of Wisdom's eternity: she is present both at the beginning and at the end of time. The first man, Adam, did not know Wisdom perfectly because the Torah had not yet been revealed. But even the last man on earth will never be able to fathom her depths. In addition, we may discern a certain historical progression in the mention of the five rivers and two men: The first man, Adam, is of course related to the four rivers of Eden. But the Jordan seems out of place. Why is it listed after three of the rivers of Eden but before the Gihon, which was also in Eden? The Jordan is best known for the episode of the entrance into the Promised Land (Josh 4). The Gihon is perhaps listed last because in addition to having been one of the rivers of Eden, it was also the primary water source for Jerusalem in the first Temple period.[52] Thus the order of the five rivers may be indicating a historical progression recalling Eden (the Pishon, Tigris, Euphrates, and Gihon), the entrance into Canaan (the Jordan), and the first Temple period (the Gihon).

2.7.2 *Wisdom's Eschatological Streams* (*vv. 30–34*)

> [30] I went forth like a canal from a river
> and like a water channel into a garden (εἰς παράδεισον).
> [31] I said, "I will water my orchard
> and drench my garden plot"
> and lo, my canal became a river,
> and my river became a sea.

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51 On the waters of Eden as a life-giving symbol in early Jewish traditions, cf. 2 En. 8; Apoc. Ab. 21; 1QH 16:4–26. These texts are discussed in Um, *The Theme of Temple Christology in John's Gospel*, 20–55.

52 The Gihon was also the place where Zadok the priest and Nathan the prophet anointed Solomon to be king (cf. 1 Kgs 1:33, 38, 45; 2 Chr 32:30).

In verse 30 the subject returns to the first person, but it is not clear whether it is Wisdom who is speaking again or now Ben Sira writing as a teacher of wisdom.[53] If the rivers of vv. 25–27 recall the rivers of Eden, the entrance into the Promised Land, and the sacred river flowing out of Jerusalem, now the ever-widening stream of vv. 30–31 clearly alludes to the river flowing out of Ezekiel's eschatological Temple (Ezek 47:1–12). According to Ezekiel's description, these waters pass south of the altar, trickle out of the eastern gate with an ever increasing and deepening flow down into the Aravah valley and into the Dead Sea, causing the waters of the sea to be "healed" and miraculously revived with an abundance of fish returning to the formerly salty waters. Along the banks of this supernatural river will grow all kinds of lush trees whose "fruit will be for food and their leaves for medicine" (cf. also Joel 3:17–18; Zech 14:8–9). With this sixth river, Ben Sira has masterfully drawn an instant bird's eye view of Wisdom's ongoing presence in human history from Eden to the eschaton. He has also tied the end back to the beginning, because the miraculous trees whose "fruit will not fail" growing alongside Ezekiel's river are no doubt another reference to the Tree of Life and Garden of Eden. Flowing water, springs and streams are also an important theme of Isaiah's eschatological visions, which speak of drawing water with joy from the wells of salvation (Isa 12:3), and of God Himself being a "place of broad rivers and streams" (Isa 33:21). Other passages are even more richly evocative, describing miraculous waters turning the desert into a blooming garden:

> The desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose . . . for waters shall burst forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert. The parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water. (Isa 35:1, 6–7)
>
> I will open rivers in desolate heights, and fountains in the midst of the valleys; I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water. I will plant in the wilderness the cedar and the acacia tree, the myrtle and the oil tree; I will set in the desert the cypress tree and the pine and the box tree together. (Isa 41:18–19)

The wondrous outpouring of water which revives nature and restores the weary soul is also associated with the outpouring of God's Spirit on those who come to the waters, for they will themselves become a watered garden and permanent spring of refreshing water:

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53 In the Greek and Syriac versions the "I" is anonymous but seems to be identified with Ben Sira speaking. The Latin version, however, unequivocally identifies "I" with Wisdom ("Ego sapientiam effudi flumina").

> The LORD will guide you continually, and satisfy your soul in drought, and strengthen your bones; you shall be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters do not fail. (Isa 58:11; cf. also Isa 44:3–4)

The motif of springs and fountains is also characteristic of love imagery. The Canticle's mention of a garden, orchard (παράδεισος, cf. Gen 2:8), living waters, streams, and spices reveals even more allusions to Sirach 24's Wisdom, to Eden, and to the eschatological streams of water:

> A garden enclosed is my sister, my spouse, a spring shut up, a fountain sealed. Your plants are an orchard (παράδεισος) of pomegranates with pleasant fruits, fragrant henna with spikenard, spikenard and saffron, calamus and cinnamon, with all trees of frankincense, myrrh and aloes, with all the chief spices – A fountain of gardens, a well of living waters, and streams from Lebanon. (Cant 4:12–15)

The Book of Proverbs also associates fountains and streams of water with the love of "the wife of your youth":

> Drink water from your own cistern, and running water from your own well. Should your fountains be dispersed abroad, streams of water in the streets? . . . Let your fountain be blessed, and rejoice with the wife of your youth. (Prov 5:15–18)

Sirach's rivers thus simultaneously evoke biblical imagery typical of erotic love, as well as recalling the streams of Eden, the Temple (supplied by the Gihon), and the miraculous streams flowing out of the eschatological Temple (cf. Ezekiel, Zechariah, Joel) that water both nature and soul at the end of days (cf. Isaiah).

2.7.3 *Lady Wisdom on Four Holy Mountains*

Lady Wisdom concludes her song of praise with two verses (32–33) that are eschatologically oriented towards the future. She promises:

> [32] I will again make instruction shine forth like the dawn, and I will make it shine afar;
> [33] I will again pour out teaching like prophecy, and leave it to all future generations.

Wisdom's promise to make instruction "shine forth" and to pour out teaching like prophecy to "all future generations" means that Ben Sira is now comparing

her instruction to prophetic speech.[54] We hear echoes of Isaiah's promise that the radiant light of the Lord will shine one day not only upon Israel, but on all the nations of the earth (Isa 60:1–3). Sirach 24:32–33 is also reminiscent of the well-known passage in Isaiah 2:2–3 announcing that in the latter days the instruction or law of the Lord will go forth from the "mountain of the Lord's house," situated in Zion/Jerusalem, and all nations will flow to it to learn His ways and walk in His paths. We have already mentioned the "mountain of the Lord" as possibly the "high places" of Wisdom's dwelling in Sir 24:4 and certainly the "high hill" where she stands in Prov 8:2.[55] By returning here to the cosmic mountain of the Lord we have come full circle. The entire scene of Sirach 24 has taken place on the Lord's holy mountain, in the Tabernacle/Temple standing on Mount Zion (Sir 24:10). For Ben Sira, well acquainted with the writings of the prophets, the "holy hill of Zion" or Jerusalem (cf. Ps 2:6; 48:1–2) is identical with the "mountain of the Lord" from which flows the river of living waters (Ezek 47:1–12; Joel 3:17–18; Zech 14:8–9). These eschatological waters of healing are associated with the rivers of Eden (Isa 51:3; Ezek 47:12; Ps 36:7–10),[56] and Eden itself is identified with the "holy mountain of God" (Ezek 28:13–14). The Temple on Mount Zion was God's dwelling, just as He dwelt with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden.[57]

Let us now attempt to summarize this rather dazzling interconnection of themes. For Ben Sira, the "holy mountain of God" from which flow streams of living water is simultaneously:

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54 On Sirach's association of Wisdom with prophecy, cf. Perdue, "Ben Sira and the Prophets," esp. 136–38; Beentjes, "Happy the One who Meditates on Wisdom," 205–227 (esp. 223–25).

55 Cf. above, p. 58.

56 Ps 36:9: "You give them drink from the river of your pleasures" = "river of your Edens" (נַחַל עֲדָנֶיךָ).

57 The carved cherubim, palm trees and flowers on the doors of the Temple, as well as the two cherubim over the Ark of the Covenant evoking the two cherubim who guarded the entrance of paradise after the expulsion of Adam and Eve (Gen 3:24) made it clear that the Temple was meant to replicate paradise. Cf. Fournier-Bidoz, "L'arbre et la demeure" and below, p. 382. The setting in Sirach 24 in fact corresponds to all five attributes of the cosmic mountain of Zion in biblical tradition as proposed by Levenson (*Sinai and Zion*, 115–137): (1) the cosmic mountain is situated at the center of the world; (2) it is the point of junction between heaven and earth; (3) it is a place where time stands still and where a primordial mythical and sacred time is made present; (4) it is associated with the primal paradise of the Garden of Eden; (5) it is intimately associated with creation.

1. The Garden of Eden (cf. Ezek 28:13–14; 1 En. 24:3–4; 25:3–5);[58]
2. Mount Sinai (cf. Exod 3:1; 19:3);[59]
3. Mount Zion, seat of the Temple (cf. Ps 2:6; Ps 46:4; 48:1–2; Wis 9:8);
4. The Eschatological Temple (cf. Isa 2:3; Ezek 47:1–12; Joel 3:17–18; Zech 14:8–9).

The close identification of Eden, Sinai, and Zion, and the eschatological Temple (which is nothing but an extension of Zion) is confirmed not only by Sirach 24 and its intricate web of rich metaphors, but also quite straightforwardly in the Book of Jubilees:

> [Enoch] burnt the incense of the sanctuary, (even) sweet spices acceptable before the Lord on the Mount. For the Lord has four places on the earth, the *Garden of Eden*, and the Mount of the East, and this mountain on which thou art this day, *Mount Sinai*, and *Mount Zion* (which) will be sanctified in the new creation for a sanctification of the earth. (Jub. 4:25–26, emphasis added)
>
> And [Noah] knew that the *Garden of Eden* is the *holy of holies*, and the dwelling of the Lord, and *Mount Sinai* the centre of the desert, and *Mount Zion* – the centre of the navel of the earth: these three were created as holy places facing each other. (Jub. 8:19–20, emphasis added)

Eden is thus seen as a temple and sanctuary, for it is "holier than all the earth besides, and every tree that is planted in it is holy" (Jub. 3:12).[60] Biblical literature often recalls it in conjunction with the loss of former glory (Gen 13:10; Ezek 28:11–19; 31:6–9; 16–18; Joel 2:3), and with the hope of a future restoration (Isa 51:3; Ezek 36:35).[61]

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58 On the tradition of the rivers in Eden, cf. also below, p. 159 n. 142.

59 There is no mention of flowing water at Mount Sinai, but shortly before the Israelites' arrival there, Moses made water spring out of the rock for them at Massah and Meribah (Exod 17:6).

60 Cf. Ruiten, *Primaeval History Interpreted*, 85–89.

61 Eden is also associated with the future Temple in extra-biblical literature: cf. 1 Enoch 24–32; T. Levi 18:6; T. Dan 5:12; Apoc. Mos. 29:1–6; (Ruiten, *Primaeval History Interpreted*, 89). 1 Enoch 24–32 remarkably confirms (with some variations) what we have learned from Sirach 24, namely that Eden is situated on (seven) mountains, full of fragrant trees, spices, and beautiful fruit, watered by flowing streams. The summit of the highest mount is "like the throne of God" (25:3), and the Tree of Life will be "transplanted to the holy place, to the temple of the Lord" (25:5).

2.8 Creation, Tabernacle, and Wisdom's "Incarnation"

The discussion above has highlighted Lady Wisdom's nuptial role at four key moments of salvation history through a rich intertextuality between Sirach 24, the Song of Songs, and the narrative traditions of creation/Eden, Sinai/the Torah, the Tabernacle/Temple, and the prophetic eschatological visions. One final piece of evidence remains to confirm these interconnections: it is found in the very literary structure of Sirach 24 and its relationship with three other literary units: Genesis 1–2, Exodus 25–31, and Sirach 50. These four texts are related not only by the use of much common thematic material, but also by the systematic ordering of this material according to the pattern of the days of creation of Genesis 1.[62]

2.8.1 *Creation and Tabernacle* (*Gen 1 & Exod 25–31*)

Some time ago, Kearney argued that the seven days of creation in Genesis 1 roughly correspond to seven speeches spoken by God to Moses in Exod 25–31, giving instructions for the building of the Tabernacle.[63] For example, on the first day of creation God created the light which separated the day and night (Gen 1:3–5); and in the first speech to Moses, Aaron is made responsible for tending the Tabernacle lampstand in the evening and morning, which provides light in the sanctuary at the boundary between day and night (Exod 27:20–21; 30:7–8). On the third day, God created the sea (Gen 1:9–10); and in the third speech, Moses is told to make the bronze laver, called the "sea" in the Solomonic Temple (1 Kgs 7:23). On the seventh day of creation, God "rested" from all His work (Gen 2:2–3); and the seventh speech to Moses stresses the importance of the Sabbath rest for Israel (Exod 31:12–17). If an exact correlation between the seven days and seven speeches as proposed by Kearney remains questionable, his general hypothesis of a correspondence between the creation of the world and building of the Tabernacle has been accepted and developed by a number of scholars.[64] This correspondence reveals that the same priestly author who

62 The following observations are particularly indebted to the work of Crispin Fletcher-Louis ("The Cosmology of P and Theological Anthropology in the Wisdom of Jesus Ben Sira"), who examined in detail the intertextuality between the narratives of creation and of the building of the Tabernacle (Exod 25–31), Lady Wisdom's hymn (Sir 24), and the hymn of the high priest (Sir 50). Fletcher-Louis' observations are summarized in tabular form in Appendix C.

63 Each speech begins with the words 'The Lord spoke to Moses': Exod 25:1; 30:11, 17, 22, 34; 31:11, 12. Cf. Kearney, "Creation and Liturgy: The P Redaction of Exod 25–40."

64 Weinfeld ("Sabbath, Temple and the Enthronement of the Lord") mentions as links between creation and Temple the correlation between God's "rest" in the sanctuary

penned both the Genesis 1 creation account and the Exodus narrative of the Tabernacle's construction sees the cosmos as a macro-temple, and the account of its creation as a liturgical text. Conversely, the Tabernacle (and its successor, the Temple) is a microcosm: its construction is a reenactment of the creation of the world, and Aaron's liturgical ministry in it is an act of *imitatio Dei*.[65]

2.8.2 *Creation, Tabernacle, and Wisdom (Sir 24)*

Building upon Kearney's research, Fletcher-Louis discerned in Sirach 24 a literary structure that follows the pattern of the days of creation and the building of the Tabernacle.[66] He noted that while the second section of Sir 24 (vv. 25–33) borrows from the imagery of Genesis 2 (the rivers of Eden), the first section (vv. 3–23) is especially indebted to Genesis 1.[67] The combination of cosmic and liturgical elements means that for the author, "Wisdom's praise is set in a cultic community which is, simultaneously, a cosmic community."[68] The most salient points of the common literary structure between Sir 24, Gen 1 and Exod 25–31 are the following:

1. In Sir 24:3, Wisdom coming forth from the mouth of God recalls God's creative act by means of His spoken word (cf. Gen 1:3, 6, 9, etc.), and her covering the earth like a mist alludes to the Spirit hovering over

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(Ps 132:8, 14) and His rest on the seventh day of creation; linguistic parallels between the completion of the universe and completion of the Tabernacle (see the table below, p. 90); the relation between the building of the Tabernacle and the seventh day (cf. Exod 24:15–16); and the motif of the "enthronement of the Lord" connecting both creation and Temple, preserved in Second Temple liturgy. Fretheim (*Exodus*, 268–72) notes the role of the Spirit of God in both narratives, the dedication of the Tabernacle on new year's day corresponding to the first day of creation, and the importance given to shape, order, and design in the building of the Tabernacle. For more on the creation-Tabernacle correlation, cf. section 7.1.1.1 below, p. 359f.; Fletcher-Louis' summary in "The Cosmology of P," 77–79, and his bibliographical notes, *ibid*., p. 77 n. 24.

65 Cf. Fletcher-Louis, "The Cosmology of P," 77, 79. For more on the Sabbath as link between creation and the Tabernacle, and the Sanctuary as "spiritual completion" of the universe, cf. below, p. 359f.

66 Cf. Fletcher-Louis, "The Cosmology of P," 79–94. If in some cases, the correspondence between Sir 24, Gen 1 and Exod 25–31 is only partial (referring to *either* creation or the Tabernacle, but not both), as we will see below, the parallels become remarkably complete when viewed in light of Sir 50.

67 "Sir 24:25–33 is to Sir 24:3–23 what Genesis 2 is to Genesis 1." Fletcher-Louis, "The Cosmology of P," 79.

68 Fletcher-Louis, "The Cosmology of P," 80. Fletcher-Louis also suggests that the Lord's "hosts" (δυνάμεως αὐτοῦ) in Sir 24:2 may be an allusion to the צְבָאָם of Gen 2:1.

the waters at creation (Gen 1:2). Wisdom's dwelling in "high places" (Sir 24:4) points to the heavens, and her throne in a "pillar of cloud," recalling the cloud that led the Israelites through the desert *by day* and the pillar of fire that replaced it *by night to give them light* (Exod 13:21–22), may also evoke the separation between day and night of the first day of creation.[69]

2. In Sir 24:5, Lady Wisdom claims to have "made the circuit of the vault of heaven" and "walked in the depths of the abyss." The allusion to Prov 8:27–28 (where Wisdom "drew a circle on the face of the deep" as God "made firm the skies above" and "established the fountains of the deep") clearly evokes the separation of upper and lower waters on the second day of creation.
3. (a) In Sir 24:6, Wisdom is said to have a possession "in the waves of the sea, in the whole earth." The allusion to the separation of the sea and of the dry land on the third day of creation is evident.

So far, the literary structure of Sir 24:3–6 closely follows that of Gen 1. In Sir 24:7–11, however, the author opens a parenthesis that momentarily interrupts the story of creation and leaps into Israel's salvation history, focusing on how the Creator of Wisdom "rested" (κατέπαυσεν) her tent (v. 8) and "caused her to rest" (κατέπαυσεν) in Zion's tabernacle (v. 11). This echoes the account of God who "rested" (κατέπαυσεν) from all his works on the seventh day of creation. The interruption of the story of creation is in effect an *acceleration* of the narrative to the seventh day and a *recapitulation* of creation in the Sanctuaries of Mt. Sinai and Mt. Zion. According to Fletcher-Louis, Ben Sira has placed vv. 7–11 at this point to underline the importance of relating creation to the sanctuary and, therefore, of reading Genesis 1 in light of Exodus 25–31 and 34–40.[70] Following this parenthesis, Ben Sira resumes his close following of the creation narrative:

3. (b) The lush vegetative imagery of Sir 24:12–17 returns to the setting of the third day of creation, when "the earth brought forth vegetation, plants yielding seed according to their own kinds, and trees bearing

69 Fletcher-Louis (82–83) also proposes that there may be a liturgical connection between the incense cloud offered with the daily Tamid sacrifice in the morning and evening (reenacting the division between day and night at creation), and God's theophanic cloud/fire that was upon the Tabernacle by day and by night (Exod 40:38).

70 In Fletcher-Louis' words ("The Cosmology of P," 87): "as Wisdom searches for the seventh day of creation she finds it in the wilderness Tabernacle and at Sinai."

fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind" (Gen 1:11–13). We have already treated at length this botanic symbolism in light of Garden of Eden traditions. It thus seems that Ben Sira is harmonizing the creation account of Gen 1 with the longer description of paradise in Genesis 2.[71]

4. Sir 24:15a describes Wisdom's aroma of spices like cinnamon/cassia, camel's thorn, and myrrh. There is no direct correlation with the creation of the sun, moon and stars on the fourth day, but an evident association with God's fourth speech to Moses on the making of the sacred anointing oil (made of myrrh, calamus, cinnamon, cassia; Exod 30:23–25).[72]
5. In Sir 24:15b, Wisdom compares herself to "galbanum, onycha, and stacte" and "the fragrance of frankincense in the Tabernacle." There is no correspondence with the fifth day of creation, but the reference to the ingredients of the sacred incense in God's fifth speech to Moses in unmistakable. Is Ben Sira following the sequence of creation by referring instead to corresponding aspects of Israel's cultic worship, thereby further binding together creation and the Tabernacle liturgy?
6. One does not discern any correspondence in Sir 24 to the sixth day of creation or to the sixth speech to Moses in Exod 31:1–11. However, these become visible in Sir 50 (below).
7. Ben Sira has already made a strong allusion to the seventh day of creation and Sabbath rest through the repeated use of κατέπαυσεν in Sir 24:7–11. Lady Wisdom's invitation to her banquet in 24:19–22 also evokes a return to the lost paradise of Eden: The offer to "eat your fill of my produce" is equivalent to an invitation to partake of the fruit of paradise and of the Tree of Life, and consequently to taste of Wisdom's immortality. It stands in contrast to the serpent's invitation to eat of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil that brought suffering and death to mankind. Also, in Sir 24:22, Wisdom says that he who obeys her "will not be put to shame" (οὐκ αἰσχυνθήσεται). Before

71 For more examples of a harmonized reading of Gen 1–2, cf. Jub. 2:7; 2 En. 30:1; *GenR* 15:3; Palest. Targ. Gen 2:8. Cf. Fletcher-Louis, "The Cosmology of P," 88.

72 Kearney connected the creation of the sun, moon and stars on the fourth day of creation with the anointing oil of the Tabernacle by a reference to Ps 89:21, 37–38 (in which David is anointed with holy oil, and his throne is promised to endure as long as the sun, moon and skies). This correlation seems rather forced, but a more direct correspondence of the anointing oil with the astral bodies of the fourth day of creation is seen in Sirach 50 (below).

> their fall, Adam and Eve were naked and not ashamed (οὐκ ἠσχύνοντο) (Gen 2:25). Eve mistakingly thought that eating of the forbidden fruit would make them wise, but as a result they hid from God in shame (Gen 3:7–11). Now Lady Wisdom reverses this picture, restoring true wisdom and taking away the shame of the fall.[73]

Fletcher-Louis thus sees in Sir 24:1–22 a "carefully crafted sapiential meditation on the Priestly account of creation," indebted not only to Gen 1:1–2:4, but also to the priestly narrative of the building of the Tabernacle.[74] The correspondences, however, remain incomplete until viewed in light of one final text: the hymn of the High Priest in Sirach 50.

2.8.3 *The High Priest as "Incarnation" of Wisdom (Sir 50)*

The last link binding together the creation account, the building of the Tabernacle, and Lady Wisdom's hymn is found in Sir 50, where many of the same metaphors applied to Wisdom in Sir 24 are attributed to Simon the High Priest by means of the same literary structure used in our previous three texts.[75] In the Hebrew recension of the text,[76] this unit begins with a reference to the "beauty" (תפארת) of Simon immediately after a mention of the "beauty" (תפארת) of Adam (49:16–50:1). Given that Simon's high priestly garments are called בגדי תפארת in Sir 50:11, this is possibly an early testimony to the ancient tradition that Adam wore the high priestly robes, playing the role of first High Priest of humanity.[77] Ben Sira could be portraying Simon the high priest and

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73 Fletcher-Louis ("The Cosmology of P," 91) sees an additional correlation between Sir 24 and the seventh day of creation in Wisdom's promise that "those who work in me will not sin" – a possible allusion to a reversal of the curse on work brought by sin in the Garden (Gen 3:17–19).

74 Fletcher-Louis, "The Cosmology of P," 93.

75 For a useful commentary on this text, see Hayward, *The Jewish Temple*, 44–63.

76 Our study of Sir 50 is both helped and made more complex by the existence of a Hebrew text (the Geniza Ms B).

77 For a survey of scholarly positions on the "glory of Adam" in Sir 49:16, see Levison, *Portraits of Adam in Early Judaism*, 44–45. Rabbinic writings attest to the tradition that Adam's garments were the high priestly robes, handed down through successive generations until they reached Aaron: cf. *y. Meg.* 1:11 *GenR* 20:12; 97:6; *NumR* 4:8; *Tg. Pseudo-Jonathan* Gen 27:15; Jerome, *Quaestiones Hebraicae in Genesim* on Gen 27:15. For later sources, cf. Hayward, *The Jewish Temple*, 45. Adam's role as high priest is already known from the account in Jubilees 3:27 of his offering a sweet sacrifice with frankincense, galbanum, stacte and spices (see above, p. 65 n. 26).

representative of Israel in light of the first man, as a type of second Adam.[78] This association of Simon with Adam sets the stage for a description of the High Priest that shows many common features with the creation account and the construction of the sanctuary:[79]

1. The beginning of Sir 50 shows no obvious parallel with the first day of creation, but given the cosmic symbolism of the high priest and Temple that is developed in the following verses, it may be that the action of Simon who "repaired the house" and "fortified the Temple" (50:1) generally points to the creation of the universe.
2. In Sir 50:2, we are told that Simon "laid the foundations of the height of double (walls? waters?), the high ἀνάλημμα of the Temple enclosure." The Temple, situated on God's cosmic mountain, was thought to cover the expanse between the upper and lower realms (cf. Ps 78:69) in a way similar to the firmament's separation of the upper and lower waters on the second day of creation.[80] Fletcher-Louis proposes that Simon's laying of foundations (ἐθεμελιώθη) and the mention of the "height" (ὕψος) also hint at the lower and upper limits of the cosmos. He also notes that the ἀνάλημμα, usually translated as "fortification" or "retaining wall," was also understood by the first century BCE as a model or map of the cosmos, and particularly of the firmament.[81] This cosmic interpretation of Sir 50:2 seems rather forced.
3. According to Sir 50:3, in the days of the high priest "a cistern for water was quarried out, a reservoir like the sea in circumference." This corresponds to the creation of the sea on the third day, and to the instructions for the building of the laver in God's third speech to Moses. Simon's cistern is to the sea over which Wisdom rules (Sir 24:6a) what

78 As Hayward writes (*The Jewish Temple*, 45), Ben Sira seems to imply that "the privileges granted to the first man, and thus to all humankind, are also peculiarly summed up in Israel whose representative is Simon in his function as sacrificing high priest." The connection between Adam and Israel at Sinai is also implied in Sir 17:1–13, which speaks together of the creation of Adam and of God forming an eternal covenant with His people when they saw His glorious majesty and heard His voice. It is also possible that the same root פאר stands behind Wisdom's self-praise/glory (καυχήσεται) in Sir 24:1–2.

79 Cf. Fletcher-Louis, "The Cosmology of P." 94–111.

80 Cf. Ps 150:1 where the sanctuary and the firmament are associated as the places where praise is given to God.

81 Cf. Vitruvius (*On Architecture* 9.1.1; 9.7.1; 9.8.1; 9.8.8; 9.9.1). Fletcher-Louis suggests that the ambiguous adjective "double" (διπλῆς) with no noun might evoke the waters above and below of Gen 1:6–7. "The Cosmology of P," 98–99.

the laver of Exod 30:17–21 is to the newly created sea of Gen 1:9–10.[82] The creation of vegetation on the third day is also matched by the high priest's identification with many of the same trees, plants and flowers as Lady Wisdom in chapter 24.[83]

4. In Sir 50:5–7, the high priest comes out of the sanctuary glorious "like the morning star among the clouds, like the moon when it is full; like the sun shining upon the temple of the Most High, and like the rainbow gleaming in glorious clouds." If the imagery of Sir 24 was limited to Tabernacle symbolism (the anointing oil), here the fulfillment of the creation of the sun, moon and stars on the fourth day of creation is clear: the high priest is identified with creation itself.[84]
5. In Sir 50:9, the high priest is compared to "fire and incense in the censer, like a vessel of hammered gold adorned with all kinds of precious stones." This matches the subject of God's fifth speech to Moses in Exod 30:34–38 on the making of sacred incense.[85] The high priest's adornment of precious stones also takes up Wisdom's identification with precious stones, itself associated with the other traditions of precious stones in biblical literature that were seen above (cf. also Appendix B).
6. Sir 50:11–13 describes Simon clothed in splendor, serving at the altar and offering sacrifices while surrounded by his fellow priests. Fletcher-Louis argues that Ben Sira is drawing a picture of the high priest as new Adam, clothed with his "garments of glory" and restoring the "true image of God ruling over every living creature which he was given on the sixth day of creation."[86] His receiving portions of the sacrificial offerings from the other priests evokes not only the

82 The creation of the sea is described in Sir 39:17b using the same expression as 50:3 (ἀποδοχεῖα ὑδάτων).

83 The High Priest is "like roses in the days of the first fruits, like lilies by a spring of water, like a green shoot on Lebanon on a summer day . . . like an olive tree putting forth its fruit, and like a cypress towering in the clouds" (50:8, 10). As he stood by the hearth of the altar he was "like a young cedar on Lebanon; and [the priests] surrounded him like the trunks of palm trees" (50:12).

84 One hears echoes of the psalmist who spoke of God making a tent/tabernacle out of which came the sun "like a bridegroom from his wedding canopy" (Ps 19:4–5). Ben Sira's mention of the rainbow (τόξον) may also hint at an identification of Simon with God's own anthropomorphic glory as seen in the bright rainbow (τόξον) of Ezek 1:26–28.

85 Not surprisingly, Ben Sira avoids the mention of the swarming creatures created on the fifth day in this liturgical setting, since these animals are all regarded as unclean.

86 Cf. Fletcher-Louis, "The Cosmology of P," 105.

Tabernacle sacrificial worship but also Adam's dominion over every living thing and Lady Wisdom's feast in chapter 24:20–22.

7. Sir 50:14–21 describes how the high priest "finished ministering at the altar (עד כלותו לשרת מזבח) and arranged the offering to the Most High." The end of the liturgical ministry closely mirrors the accounts of creation and of the building of the Tabernacle, with a common language of completion and blessing:[87]

Creation (Gen 1–2)	**Tabernacle (Exod 39–40)**	**High Priest (Sir 50)**
Thus the heavens and the earth were finished (וַיְכֻלּוּ, συνετελέσθησαν), and all the host of them (ὁ κόσμος αὐτῶν). And on the seventh day God finished (וַיְכַל, συνετέλεσεν) his work which he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had done. (Gen 2:1–2)	Thus all the work of the tabernacle of the tent of meeting was finished (וַתְּכֻל). (Exod 39:32) And he erected the court round the tabernacle and the altar, and set up the screen of the gate of the court. So Moses finished (וַיְכַל) the work. (Exod 40:33)	Until he finished ministering at the altar (עד כלותו לשרת מזבח) . . . and set in order the arrangements of the Most High (Sir 50:14, Heb.) . . . until he finished ministering at the altar (עד כלותו לשרת מזבח) (50:19, Heb.) [. . . until the cosmos of the Lord was completed (συντελεσθῇ κόσμος κυρίου) and they completed (ἐτελείωσαν) his service. (50:19, Gk)]
And God blessed them (man and woman) (וַיְבָרֶךְ אֹתָם, ηὐλόγησεν αὐτοὺς) (Gen 1:28) So God blessed (וַיְבָרֶךְ, ηὐλόγησεν) the seventh day and hallowed it. (Gen 2:3)	And Moses saw all the work, and behold, they had done it; as the LORD had commanded, so had they done it. And Moses blessed them (וַיְבָרֶךְ אֹתָם). (Exod 39:43)	Then he came down, and lifted up his hands over the whole congregation of the sons of Israel, to pronounce the blessing of the Lord (ברכת ה', εὐλογίαν κυρίου) with his lips, and to glory in his name. (Sir 50:20)

87 The linguistic parallels between the completion accounts of creation and the Tabernacle were noted by Cassuto (*Commentary on the Book of Exodus*, chap. 39–40); Weinfeld ("Sabbath, Temple and the Enthronement of the Lord," 502–503); Berman, *The Temple*,

Ben Sira evidently wishes to create a connection not only between Lady Wisdom and Simon, but also with his predecessor Aaron, the first high priest who was ordained and anointed by Moses at Mount Sinai. This is seen in a comparison of our texts with Sir 45:6–16: Ben Sira describes how God made an "everlasting covenant" with Aaron at Sinai, entrusting to him the priesthood, clothing him with a "glorious robe" (περιστολὴ δόξης) and "superb perfection" (συντέλεια καυχήματος), and calling him to continually burn the *tamid* offering with "incense and a pleasing odor as a memorial portion" (θυμίαμα καὶ εὐωδίαν εἰς μνημόσυνον) (Sir 45:7–8, 15–16). Simon now fulfills the same role in the Temple, clothed with a similar στολὴ δόξης and συντέλεια καυχήματος, bringing offerings at the altar along with a wine libation which is a ὀσμὴ εὐωδίας to the Most High, and concluding his liturgical ministry with a trumpet blast for *remembrance* (εἰς μνημόσυνον) before Him (Sir 50:11, 15, 16). We recall that the same terms are also used of Lady Wisdom, who gives forth an "aroma of spices" (ὀσμή ἀρωμάτων) and "pleasant odor" (εὐωδία) (24:15), is compared to a vine (24:17) and is "drunk" (24:21), and whose banquet is called a "*memorial*" meal (τὸ μνημόσυνόν μου), serving as a *remembrance* of her presence and actions in creation and salvation history (24:20). Liturgical worship, offerings and sacrifices, the pleasant odor of frankincense (λίβανος), and the pouring of wine all serve to illustrate the communion between God and His people rendered possible through the mediation of Lady Wisdom and the high priest – originally Aaron at Sinai and now Simon in the Temple. Accordingly, just as Lady Wisdom's sacred meal is "sweeter than honey" (ὑπὲρ τὸ μέλι γλυκυ), so the liturgical singers praise the high priest in a "sweet melody" (ἐγλυκάνθη μέλος, 50:18).

In summary, even though some of his interpretations seem rather strained, there is merit in Fletcher-Louis' suggestion that Sirach 24 and 50 are "two carefully crafted halves of a literary dyptich modeled on the canonical dialectic between creation and Tabernacle,"[88] according to which the creation of the world is in a close symmetrical relationship to Israel's construction of sacred space and time. The Tabernacle is a type of "mini-cosmos," and its liturgical service is directly correlated to the running of the universe. Israel's worship indeed seems to intend to bring creation towards its completion. The metaphysical link between creation and Tabernacle is the presence of omnipresent Wisdom, who rules over the universe, on the one hand, and serves in the sanctuary as the high priest on the other. Ben Sira thus sees the high priest as impersonation and "incarnation" of Wisdom, possessing the same attributes as her and officiating in the Temple (as she does), filling

13–14; Levenson, "The Temple and the World," 287–88; *ibid., Sinai and Zion*, 143; *ibid., Creation and the Persistence of Evil*, 85–86.

88 Cf. Fletcher-Louis, "The Cosmology of P," 112.

the sanctuary with the Lord's glory just as Lady Wisdom fills the earth with the same glory. As Fournier-Bidoz writes, just as Simon in his liturgical service fills the court of the sanctuary with glory, so Wisdom, planted in the land and people of Israel, prospers and attests to their holiness. As God sent Wisdom to dwell among men, the Temple cult counts among God's greatest gifts to His people.[89] The "incarnation" of Wisdom in the High Priest constitutes a striking precursor to the incarnation of the Logos in the Gospel of John that we will discuss below.

2.9 Summary: Lady Wisdom in Sirach 24

For Ben Sira, Wisdom is the sustaining principle of all creation. But she is more than an impersonal force. Her female identity, her seductive invitation to men to join her at her feast, and her self-description in the language of the Song of Songs indicate that she communicates herself to her people in a nuptial way. Eden is her primordial sanctuary and dwelling, for in her universality she belongs to and is perhaps even "married" to all mankind. Sinai is the place where she "contracted herself" and gave herself to the people of Israel as the Torah in a type of "betrothal" event. At the same time, Wisdom's gift of self to God's people is seen as a renewed access to Eden's lost Tree of Life. The betrothal at Sinai is extended liturgically into time in the Tabernacle and Temple, established on God's holy mountain (itself recalling Eden and Sinai) as the "nuptial chamber" of Wisdom and Israel. Finally, Wisdom's presence in the Temple serves as a permanent reminder and hope of the paradisal world to come at the end of time when Torah, the source of all Wisdom, will stream from the top of God's mountain to all nations as the sign and pledge of the consummated marriage between Lady Wisdom and redeemed humanity. In Fournier-Bidoz's words, Wisdom evokes the earth and the sanctuary as a coherent whole, both being places of rest and of festive rejoicing that recall paradisal images, either at the origins of creation or in the eschatological future.[90]

89 Fournier-Bidoz, "L'arbre et la demeure: Siracide XXIV 10–17," 9.

90 Fournier-Bidoz, "L'arbre et la demeure," 4.

CHAPTER 3

Philo and the Embracing Cherubim

3.1 The Memory of the Cherubim from Eden to the Exile

Somewhat surprisingly, following the rich nuptial symbolism of the OT prophets and wisdom literature we encounter a relative scarcity of nuptial imagery in late Second Temple sources. Neither pseudepigraphical writings nor the Dead Sea Scrolls make any sustained use of nuptial symbolism to depict the relationship between God and His people.[1] Only one late Second Temple author makes a significant contribution to the development of early nuptial symbolism: Philo of Alexandria. In addition, one particular motif possibly dating back to the Second Temple period is of considerable interest for our nuptial study – but to adequately consider it we will have to rely at least partially on the memory of later rabbinic sources pertaining to the Second Temple and its service: this is the tradition of the two golden cherubim embracing each other in the Holy of Holies as a tangible symbol of the union between God and Israel.[2] Before looking at the beliefs regarding the embracing cherubim in the Temple, it will be fitting to trace a brief survey of their history throughout the biblical narrative, beginning with the memory of the cherubim in Eden, continuing with the golden cherubim of the Tabernacle and of the first Temple, and culminating with the awesome cherubim of Ezekiel's *merkavah*.[3]

3.1.1 *The Cherubim in Eden*

The cherubim first appear in the biblical narrative as guardians of the Garden of Eden. After the expulsion of Adam and Eve, God is said to have placed the winged creatures at the east of paradise to guard the way to the Tree of Life by means of the flaming sword that turned in every direction (Gen 3:24). Eden is

1 One possible exception is the legend of *Joseph and Aseneth*, whose possible dating ranges from 100 BCE to 100 CE. I will postpone the study of this text to section 5.2 below, p. 268.

2 As we will see, the ambiguity of Second Temple authors regarding the cherubim is somewhat enlightened by the consideration of later Talmudic sources. Obviously, the fact that the Talmud claims to recall traditions dating back to the Second Temple does not necessarily mean that these traditions are historical. They could have emerged and developed following the destruction of the Temple.

3 For recent studies of the embracing cherubim in the Temple, cf. Patai, *Man and Temple*, 91–92; *ibid., The Hebrew Goddess*, 69–91; Pope, *Song of Songs*, 153–58; Seaich, *The Great Mystery*, 5–22; "Cherubim," in *ISBE*.

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depicted not only as home of the first man and woman and primeval abode of humanity, but also as the dwelling place of God where He "walked" (Gen 3:8) and conversed with them. In preventing the return of mankind to Eden and to the Tree of Life, the guarding cherubim thus symbolize the rupture of the primeval communion between the divinity and humanity. The presence of cherubim in paradise is also attested in Ezekiel's Eden tradition: in his oracle against the king of Tyre, the prophet seems to identify the king with Adam, the first man, created "full of wisdom and perfect in beauty," beautifully bedecked with precious jewels, and placed in "Eden, God's garden" and "God's sacred mountain," in the presence of an anointed guardian cherub (Ezek 28:12–14).[4] After he rebelled, sinned, and "profaned his sanctuaries" (חִלַּלְתָּ מִקְדָּשֶׁיךָ), however, the cherub banished the king from the divine mountain (28:16) and cast him down to the ground to suffer a dreadful end (vv. 18–19).

3.1.2 *The Cherubim in the Tabernacle*

According to the book of Exodus, the two cherubim of solid gold overshadowing the Ark of the Covenant in the Holy of Holies were at the heart of the Tabernacle and its service. Yet we know almost nothing about their appearance or form.[5] Exodus 25:18–22 (and 37:7–9) tells us that they faced each other with their wings stretched upwards, covering the mercy seat which constituted a throne upon which the glory of God rested. It was from there that YHWH communed with Israel and spoke to Moses:

> And there I will meet with you, and I will speak with you from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim which are on the ark of the Testimony. (Exod 25:22; also Num 7:89)

Cherubim figures were also woven into the ten curtains of the Tabernacle and on the veil that separated the Holy place from the Holy of Holies (Exod 26:1, 31;

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4 The text is not without considerable problems. While the MT identifies the king of Tyre and the cherub as the same person (אַתְּ־כְּרוּב מִמְשַׁח הַסּוֹכֵךְ), the LXX (followed by the RSV) more plausibly renders the MT's אַתְּ as אֶת ("*with* an anointed guardian cherub I placed you": μετὰ τοῦ χερουβ ἔθηκά σε) and thus sees the king and cherub as two distinct figures. Ezek 28:16 MT/NKJ: "and I destroyed you, O covering cherub, from the midst of the fiery stones;" LXX/RSV: "and the guardian cherub drove you out from the midst of the fiery stones."

5 Neither Exodus nor 1 Kings/Chronicles say anything about the appearance of the cherubim in the Temple. They possibly resembled the figures with a human face and two outstretched wings attached to the arms known from Egyptian art, or Assyrian winged human figures. Josephus claims that no one knew what shape they had (see below). Cf. Carol Meyers, "Cherubim" in *ABD*, 899–900; "Cherubim" in *ISBE*; "Cherubim" in *Catholic Encyclopedia*.

36:8, 35), resulting in a predominance of cherubim motifs throughout the Tabernacle precinct.

3.1.3 *The Cherubim in the First Temple*

The biblical tradition recalls the two cherubim of the Solomonic Temple as massive, ten cubits high (15 feet) and the same length from one wing tip to the other (1 Kgs 6:23–28). Made of olive wood and overlaid with gold, they overshadowed the Ark of the Covenant as in the former Tabernacle (1 Kgs 8:6–7; 1 Chr 28:18; 2 Chr 5:7–8). According to the chronicler, however, the figures no longer faced each other as they did in the Tabernacle but stood side by side, together facing "the house" (presumably the Holy Place) with their wing tips spanning the entire width of the Holy of Holies, the outer wings touching the sanctuary's walls and the inner wings touching each other in the center (2 Chr 3:10–13). The entire Temple structure was decorated with figures of cherubim, including the walls of the inner and outer sanctuaries, the inner and outer doors (1 Kgs 6:29–35; 2 Chr 3:7), the veil leading into the Holy of Holies (2 Chr 3:14), and the bases of the ten lavers (1 Kgs 7:29, 36). The predominance of the cherubim figures all over the Tabernacle/Temple and their role as sign of the divine abode and presence was such that YHWH eventually became known as "the One who dwells between the cherubim."[6]

3.1.4 *Ezekiel's Cherubim*

For Ezekiel, the cherubim are the bearers and movers of the throne of God upon which rested the divine כָּבוֹד, represented as a thick cloud and intense brightness (Ezek 9:3; 10:1–22; 11:22). They are identified with the living creatures of the terrifying *merkavah* vision of the book's first chapter (1:5f.; 10:15, 20). These moveable four-faced and four-winged cherubim are hence much more complex than the silent and immobile figures that dwelt in the Tabernacle and First Temple. The idea that God majestically "rides" on cherubs appears to be related to other biblical references to the deity "riding on the clouds" – whether these clouds are intended to denote the cloud of glory that filled the sanctuary or the heavenly clouds that served as His chariot.[7] Cherubim are also abundantly present in Ezekiel's eschatological Temple, carved on the doors and inner walls of the sanctuary (41:18, 20, 25).

Noteworthy is the fact that there is no trace of any sexual or nuptial symbolism associated with the cherubim in the Bible – neither in the Pentateuch and historical books, nor in Ezekiel. This is in sharp contrast to the conceptual development that they will undergo in later literature.

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6 1 Sam 4:4; 6:2; 2 Kgs 19:15; Isa 37:16; Ps 80:1; 99:1; LXX Dan 3:55.

7 Cf. 1 Chr 28:18; Ps 18:10; 104:3–4; Isa 19:1; Hab 3:8; Patai, *The Hebrew Goddess*, 72–75.

3.2 The Mystery of the Holy of Holies in the Second Temple

By the Second Temple period, the cherubim were known in Israel as figures representing God's paradoxical relationship with fallen humanity (as guardians of Eden barring access to the Tree of Life) and with the people of Israel (as "guardians" of the Holy of Holies), symbolizing at the same time the proximity of the divine and His fearsome inapproachability. But a foundational question must be asked regarding this period: Were there cherubim in the Second Temple? The traditional view holds that the Holy of Holies of the Second Temple was empty. Jeremiah had prophesied that the Ark of the Covenant would at one point disappear and be forgotten (Jer 3:16), and a tradition in 2 Maccabees claims that the same prophet took the Ark to Egypt and hid it in a cave at an unknown location near Mount Sinai (2 Macc 2:5–7).[8] However, as Patai has shown, a closer examination of Second Temple and rabbinic sources reveals considerable ambiguity as to what exactly was in the Holy of Holies of the Second Temple. Josephus claims at one point that there was "nothing at all" in it (*Wars* 5.5.5), but elsewhere he admits that there was in fact something in the Temple that was kept under tight secrecy from outsiders: He relates that when the Roman conquerors Pompey, Licinius, and lastly Titus conquered Jerusalem and the Temple they did not find in it "anything but what was agreeable to the strictest piety; although what they found we are not at liberty to reveal to other nations" (*Contra Apion* 2:7). Josephus is just as ambiguous regarding the intrusion of Antiochus Epiphanes into the Temple centuries earlier, claiming that Antiochus did not find "anything there that was ridiculous" (*ibid.*). The Jewish historian is even reluctant to talk about the cherubim of the desert Tabernacle and First Temple: of those in the Tabernacle he writes that "their form is not like that of any of the creatures which men have seen," and of those in Solomon's Temple he claims even greater ignorance: "nobody can tell or even conjecture what was the shape of these cherubim" (*Antiquities* 3.6.5). Moreover, in his otherwise detailed description of Israel's former sanctuaries Josephus completely omits any mention of the many cherubim that adorned the curtains, veil, and walls (*Antiquities* 8.3.3).

A generation earlier, Philo is just as nebulous regarding the Holy of Holies. Without saying outright that it was empty, he goes at length to state that its content was invisible to all, even to the high priest when he entered it. Such an emphasis on the invisibility of the interior of the Holy of Holies would seem odd if it were entirely empty:

8 On the tradition of Jeremiah's hiding the Ark near Sinai, cf. the first-century work *Lives of the Prophets* 2:9–14.

> What is inside is invisible to all, except to the high priest alone, and indeed to him, though charged with the duty of entering once a year, everything is invisible. For he carries in a brasier full of coals and frankincense; and then, when a great smoke proceeds from it, as is natural, and when everything all around is enveloped in it, then the sight of men is clouded, and checked, and prevented from penetrating in, being wholly unable to pierce the cloud. (*De spec. leg.* 1:72)

The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews also seems to betray a similar reluctance to speak about the cherubim, although by using the present participle he indicates that he may be describing a present or recent situation rather than recalling some scene of the distant past:[9]

> Above [the Ark] are cherubim of glory overshadowing (κατασκιάζοντα) the mercy seat. Of these things we cannot now speak in detail. (Heb 9:5)

This recurring reluctance to speak about the content of the Holy of Holies has led some scholars to deduce that a second Ark (and pair of cherubim), built more or less in imitation of the first, was in fact present in the Second Temple, but that Jewish writers of the time attempted to hide this from non-Jewish outsiders.[10] The Talmud seems to confirm this: on the one hand it states that "in five things the first Sanctuary differed from the second: in the ark, the ark-cover, the Cherubim, the fire, the Shechinah, the Holy Spirit, and the Urim-we-Thummim." But it then goes on to reveal that these things were in fact *present* in the Second Temple, though having lost some of their efficacy: "I will tell you, they were present, but they were not as helpful [as before]" (*b. Yoma* 21b).

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9 The description of the sanctuary in Heb 9:1–8 is often translated into the past tense in English, but the Greek is ambiguous as to whether the author is referring only to the past or also to the present. The priestly ministry, however, is clearly described in the present tense (Heb 9:6–7).

10 Patai (*The Hebrew Goddess*, 81) conjectures that the reason for this concealing of the cherubim in the Temple was to not give the false impression to the neighboring Gentiles that Jews worshiped idols in their sanctuary: "As an interpreter of Judaism to the Hellenistic world in general and to Rome in particular [Josephus] was loath to admit that aniconic Judaism did, in fact, tolerate the representation of human or semi-human and semi-divine figures within the sacred precincts of the Temple. Writing as he did after the destruction of the Temple, he wished to portray it as a place of pure spiritual worship, unmarred by any figure of living creatures, whether human, animal or divine. To be able to do so, he had to obliterate the memory of the cherubim, and he tried to do this by the simple expedient of silence." Cf. also Julian Morgenstern, "The Cultic Setting of the 'Enthronement Psalms'," *Hebrew Union College Annual* 35 (1964): 34–35, n. 71; Seaich, *A Great Mystery*, 5–9.

3.3 The Embracing Cherubim in the Holy of Holies

Why, then, the mystery surrounding the Holy of Holies of the Second Temple? According to the Talmud, the well-kept secret was that the cherubim embraced each other in the Holy of Holies as a figurative representation of the love between God and Israel. According to the tractate Yoma, the cherubim interacted lovingly with each other as long as Israel remained in good favor with God, and their love would be displayed to the Jewish public during the festivals as a way of reminding them of God's love for them:

> Whenever Israel came up to the Festival, the curtain would be removed for them and the Cherubim were shown to them, whose bodies were intertwined with one another, and they would be thus addressed: Look! You are beloved before God as the love between man and woman. (*b. Yoma* 54a)[11]

The cherubim in embrace in the Temple – the innermost and holiest symbol of the sanctuary – therefore came to be understood in rabbinic tradition as a symbolic expression of the nuptial relationship between God and Israel. If this tradition is authentic, it is easy to see why the Jews would have wished to conceal such a display of religious eroticism from their pagan neighbors. The Talmud, in fact, testifies to the embarrassment that this scene caused when discovered by the conquering gentiles. In one account attributed to Resh Laqish (ca. 200–275 CE):

> When the heathens entered the Temple and saw the Cherubim whose bodies were intertwisted with one another, they carried them out and said: These Israelites, whose blessing is a blessing, and whose curse is a curse, occupy themselves with such things! And immediately they despised them, as it is said: All that honored her, despised her, because they have seen her nakedness. (*b. Yoma* 54b)[12]

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11 The sages then go on to dispute (inconclusively) whether this occurred in the first or second Temple.

12 In another Midrash, the heathens are identified as Ammonites and Moabites who, after having entered the Holy of Holies and found the cherubim, "took them and put them in a cage and went around with them in all the streets of Jerusalem and said: 'You used to say that this nation was not serving idols. Now see what we found and what they were worshipping!'" (*LamR* 9; *PRK* 19:1 ed. Buber, 137b–138a). Patai believes that the scene was merely agaddically connected to the First Temple, but that the event to which it referred actually took place in the days of the Second Temple" (*The Hebrew Goddess*, 309 n. 59). It seems most plausible to him that the gentiles intruding into the Temple were the troops

Invented memory or kernel of historical truth? There is not enough conclusive evidence to decide. Nevertheless, in light of the secrecy surrounding the Holy of Holies in the Second Temple and Philo's treatment of the cherubim as representative of the union of God and man (below), it is not impossible that the Talmud may have preserved elements of an authentic historical tradition in its account of the embracing cherubim in the Second Temple.

Whether fact or fiction, I will now proceed to examine the significance and symbolism of the embracing cherubim in the Temple. I will consider how they might be related to the idea of the sacred marriage between God and Wisdom that emerged in the wisdom literature, was subsequently adopted and developed by Philo, and is later reflected in the Talmud. Seaich has proposed a four-fold symbolism of the embracing cherubim, which I will follow here:

1. The cherubim represented the "face of God";
2. They were a symbol of God's male-female image (Gen 1:26–27);
3. They were a symbol of God's redemptive marriage to Israel;
4. They were a paradigm for human marriage, patterned after God's male-female image.[13]

3.3.1 *The Cherubim as Representation of the "Face of God"*

A number of scholars have argued that the commandment that every male Israelite should "*appear* (='be seen') three times a year before the face of the Lord" (יֵרָאֶה כָּל־זְכוּרְךָ אֶל־פְּנֵי הָאָדֹן ה׳) (Exod 23:17; Deut 16:16) originally read to actively "*behold* (='see') the face of YHWH."[14] Since the three festivals when the pilgrims obtained the privilege to "see the countenance of God" coincide with the Talmud's description of the festive moments when the curtain was

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of Antiochus Epiphanes in 170 BCE (p. 87), and that the embracing cherubim were first introduced in the Holy of Holies in the first half of the 3rd century BCE (p. 89) at the time when new sacred vessels were brought into the Temple as narrated in the *Letter of Aristeas*. For Patai's view on the provenance of the cherubim-in-embrace, cf. *Man and Temple*, 92; *The Hebrew Goddess*, 83–91; 308–310 n. 59. Cf. also Seaich, *A Great Mystery*, 8.

13 Cf. Seaich, *A Great Mystery*, 9–22. For the broader background of Philo's mysticism cf. Erwin R. Goodenough: *By Light, Light: The Mystic Gospel of Hellenistic Judaism*; Peter Borgen, "Philo of Alexandria" in *ABD* 5:339–41.

14 According to this argument, the Masoretes wished to conceal the fact that the Israelites had seen something that represented the "face" of God, and they accomplished this by vocalizing the verb ראה as a *niphal* ("be seen") instead of a *qal* ("see"). Cf. Seaich, *A Great Mystery*, 9–10, n. 13; Gary Anderson, "To See Where God Dwells" in Hahn, *Temple and Contemplation*, 23–24; both cite several scholars who support this view.

removed and the embracing cherubim were shown to them, Seaich may be right in conjecturing that "the cherubim themselves must have represented the divine *panim* during the late period of the Second Temple."[15] Philo, perhaps implicitly referring to the cherubim and contradicting his earlier statement that the content of the Holy of Holies was invisible to all, claims that it was possible to "see" God in the Holy of Holies, a divine vision which he considers to be "the beginning and end of happiness." He adds that whereas the Holy Place was identified with the "sense-perceptible heaven" or visible world, the Holy of Holies represented the incorporeal world of the divine and the veil that separated the two chambers was the mediating *Logos*.[16]

3.3.2 *The Cherubim as Symbol of God's Male-Female Image*

If the two cherubim were a visual representation of the "face of God," for Philo they were also a symbol of God's male-female image. Often treating the cherubim of Eden and those of the sanctuary interchangeably,[17] he sees on a cosmological level the cherubim of Eden as "an allegorical figure of the whole heaven" or of its two hemispheres.[18] On a theosophic level, the cherubim of Eden also represent the two supreme powers of the divinity: the creative power of goodness by which He created everything, called 'God,' and His kingly power of authority by which He governed creation, called 'Lord'. The fiery sword between them is the symbol of reason.[19] God's two powers, symbolized by the cherubim, are joined in a perfect union begetting virtues for the benefit of humanity:

> While God is indeed One, his highest and chiefest powers are two, even goodness (ἀγαθότης) and sovereignty (ἐξουσία). Through His goodness He begat all that is, through His sovereignty He rules what He has begotten . . . Of these two potencies, sovereignty and goodness, the cherubim are symbols . . . (*De cherub.* 27)

> . . . these unmixed potencies are mingled and united . . . thus you may gain the virtues begotten of these powers. (*De cherub.* 29)[20]

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15 Seaich, *A Great Mystery*, 10.

16 *Quest. Exod.* 2:51–52, 94; Cf. Seaich, *A Great Mystery*, 10; Anderson, "To See Where God Dwells," 35–36.

17 The identification of the cherubim of Eden and those of the sanctuary as guardians of the Divine Presence are also seen in Targum Neofiti to Gen 3:24: "And he cast forth the man and made the glory of the Shekhinah to dwell from the beginning to the east of the garden of Eden between the two cherubim." Cf. Barker, *The Gate of Heaven*, 144.

18 *De cherub.* 21–26.

19 *De vita Mosis*, 2:98–99; *Quest. Gen.* 1:57.

20 For a similar rabbinic treatment of the cherubim, see below, p. 381 n. 81.

This is no impersonal fusion but rather one that is inspired and motivated by mutual love. For the cherubim were placed before paradise so that

> the potencies ever gazing at each other in unbroken contemplation may acquire a mutual yearning (πόθος), even that winged and heavenly love (ἔρως), wherewith God the bountiful giver inspires them. (*De cherub*. 20)

The coupling of the cherubim symbolizing the union of the two powers of God is correlated with the slightly different but related idea of the sacred marriage between God and Wisdom, borrowed from Wisdom literature:[21] for Philo also, God is the "husband of wisdom" who has intercourse with her for the sake of sowing virtue in the souls of men:

> God is a house, the incorporeal dwelling-place of incorporeal ideas, that He is the father of all things, for He begat them, and the husband of Wisdom (σοφίας ἀνὴρ), dropping the seed of happiness for the race of mortals into good and virgin soil. (*De cherub*. 49)

The *hieros gamos* between the male and female powers of the divinity is even more explicit in another remarkable passage where God is called the Father of creation who is joined with His own knowledge, personified as "mother and nurse of the universe." She receives the Creator's "seed" and gives birth to their "son," the visible world. As Patai says, the process of *creation* is thus represented as *procreation*.[22] God's knowledge, personified as "mother of the universe" is explicitly identified here with the Lady Wisdom of Proverbs 8:22:

> The Architect who made this universe was at the same time the father of what was thus born, whilst *its mother was the knowledge* (ἐπιστήμη) *possessed by its Maker*. With His knowledge God had union, not as men have it, and begat created being. And knowledge, *having received the divine seed*, when her travail was consummated bore the only beloved son who is apprehended by the senses, the world which we see. Thus in the pages of one of the inspired company, wisdom is represented as speaking of herself after this manner: "God obtained me first of all his works and founded me before the ages" (Prov. 8:22). True, for it was necessary that

21 Cf. Wis 8:3 and above, p. 29. Nickelsburg and Stone (*Faith and Piety in Early Judaism*, 225–26) devote a short section to Philo's treatment of *Sophia* as God's virgin daughter and consort.

22 Patai, *The Hebrew Goddess*, 77.

> all that came to the birth of creation should be younger than *the mother and nurse of the All*. (*De ebrietate* 30–31, emphasis added)

Philo's cherubim symbolism and the way by which it represents the two aspects of the divinity thus reveals some variations: on the one hand, it is God's attributes of goodness and power that are infatuated with a heavenly *eros* for one another. On the other hand, the *hieros gamos* takes place between God and His wife *Sophia*, while in *De ebrietate*, Philo seems to use *knowledge* and *wisdom* interchangeably to refer to God's consort and mother of the world.

3.3.3 *The Cherubim as Symbol of God's Redemptive Marriage to Israel*

For Philo, the cherubim were thus a symbol of the *hieros gamos* between the male and female aspects of the divinity – God and Lord, Father-Creator and Mother-Wisdom. Quite different is the picture that emerges from Talmudic tradition, where the cherubim symbolize the nuptial love between God and Israel. We have mentioned the passage from the tractate *Yoma* which equates the embrace of the cherubim in the Holy of Holies with the love of God for Israel, a concept that is in continuity with the covenant-marriage between God and Israel introduced by the prophets and developed in wisdom literature. The analogy is sustained in an even more revealing Talmudic passage which compares the staves that held the Ark and protruded through the veil of the Holy of Holies to the breasts of the bride in the Song of Songs:

> Scripture says: '[The staves] could not be seen without'. How then? They pressed forth and protruded as the two breasts of a woman, as it is said: My beloved is unto me as a bag of myrrh that lies between my breasts (Cant 1:13). (*b. Yoma* 54a)

This stunning metaphor implies that not only the divine Bridegroom but also *the bride* (Israel) is in the Holy of Holies, presumably consorting with her Husband. The passage is followed by the description of how the embracing cherubim were displayed to the Israelites during the festivals as a sign that they are "beloved before God as the love between man and woman." When the objection is raised that such gazing upon the holiest objects, even by priests, should lead to certain death according to the Torah (Num 4:20), a curious reply is given:

> That may be compared to a bride: As long as she is in her father's house, she is reserved in regard to her husband, but when she comes to her father-in-law's house, she is no more so reserved in regard to him. (*b. Yoma* 54a)

The implication is that while the children of Israel were in the desert during the Exodus, they were bashful and could not yet directly look at the *Shekhinah*, the awesome visible presence (*panim*) of God. Once settled in their land, however, Israel reached sufficient maturity and familiarity with her divine Husband so that she could feast her eyes upon Him.[23] The argument underlines a consciousness of the historical dimension of the marriage between God and His bride, and the growth in maturity of Israel over time which gained her the privilege of contemplating the cherubim in the Temple, a feat that would have been impossible (and indeed deadly!) at the time of the betrothal of her youth in the desert.

Another Talmudic passage adds to the mystery of the embracing cherubim by ingeniously harmonizing the difference in their orientation described in the accounts of Exodus 25:20 (where the cherubim faced each other) and 2 Chronicles 3:13 (where the cherubim stood side-by-side and had their faces turned toward the veil). We are told that the reason for this discrepancy is because the cherubim were miraculously endowed with the ability to move and change position in accordance with Israel's righteous obedience to God or lack thereof:

> How did [the cherubim] stand? . . . One Says: They faced each other; and the other says: Their faces were inward. But according to him who says that they faced each other, [it may be asked]: Is it not written, and their faces were inward? – [This is] no difficulty: The former [was] at a time when Israel obeyed the will of the Omnipresent; the latter [was] at a time when Israel did not obey the will of the Omnipresent. (*b. Baba Batra* 99a)

The dynamic and changeable positioning of the cherubim (perhaps inspired by the moveable cherubim of Ezekiel's *Merkavah*) thus added a dimension to Israel's religious imagination, being perceived as reflecting the state of the relationship between Bridegroom and bride.

Can these Talmudic ideas be traced back to the first century?[24] Undoubtedly, a sharp contrast seems to emerge between Philo's view of the cherubim as symbolizing the male-female aspects of God *ad intra*, and the rabbinic view in which they represent God's love for Israel *ad extra*. Yet the *ad extra* dimension is not absent from Philo's treatment of Wisdom: Philo considers the cherubim to

23 Cf. Patai, *The Hebrew Goddess*, 307 n. 57; Seaich, *A Great Mystery*, 16.

24 Seaich seems to think so. But his otherwise fascinating study is anything but rigorous in its chronological treatment of sources, indiscriminately putting together passages from the Hebrew Scriptures, Wisdom literature, Philo, the Talmud and even the Zohar.

be "mirrors" of Wisdom, reflecting her role of "divine surrogate" between God and the human soul[25] – as is the case in wisdom literature.[26] Philo develops the same theme of Wisdom's nuptial relationship with men flowing out of her mystical union with God.[27] As mediator of the divine essence, she must first be "impregnated by God" before she can impregnate those who 'marry' her.[28] Philo brings forth examples where God effects a spiritual procreation in the souls of the righteous, impregnating the patriarchs and Moses with the seeds of Wisdom by divine inspiration.[29] By conversing with the human soul and introducing into it "unpolluted virtues," He restores man's virginity, making "what before was a woman into a virgin again." Consequently, the soul of man is called to "live the virgin life in the house of God and cling to knowledge."[30] Thus Philo considers the wise man to be taken into God's presence through a nuptial union with Wisdom which mirrors and mystically corresponds to God's union with her. The paradoxical implication of Wisdom's dynamic and active role alongside the passive, receptive role of the human mind is that her sex is variable. As intermediary between God and man who is sometimes "sown" and sometimes "sows," Sophia spiritually takes on the masculine roles of husband and father as well as the feminine roles of wife and mother.[31]

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25 Philo sees the cherubim that guarded paradise as "presidents over wisdom, like a mirror" (*Quest. Gen.* 1:57); cf. Seaich, *A Great Mystery*, 41. Philo's view of the two cherubim as mirrors of Wisdom espoused to men recalls the Talmud's view of the embracing cherubim representing the union between God and Israel. This similarity seems to lend some credence to the Talmudic tradition of the embracing cherubim in the Second Temple.

26 As we have seen above, Lady Wisdom is not only the bride of God, but also the bride of the Temple pilgrim (or of the wise person who seeks her). She is an intermediate between both parties: being married to God and thereby receiving His divine attributes (Prov 8:22; Sir 24:3; Wis 8:3–4; 9:9), she is able to pass them on to those who seek and find her (Sir 15:2; 24:19–21; 51:13–30; Wis 8:2; 9:10).

27 "The fitting lot of those who have been held worthy of a self-taught and self-learned *sophia* is, apart from any agency of their own, to accept from God's hands the Logos as their plighted spouse and to receive Episteme, the wife of wise men" (*De post. Caini* 78). Cf. Horsley, "Spiritual Marriage with Sophia," 34–36.

28 Cf. Seaich, *A Great Mystery*, 33–35.

29 *De cong. erud. gratia* 130–35; *De cherub.* 44–47.

30 *De cherub.* 49–52. Cf. Horsley, "Spiritual Marriage with Sophia," 37; Seaich, *A Great Mystery*, 47–48.

31 "The human mind put itself into such an attitude of passivity that it becomes female as over against the masculine activity of Sophia" (Goodenough, *By Light, Light*, 139–40). For example, in one place Wisdom is called "daughter" but identified at the same time with Bethuel, the father of Rebekkah: thus "the daughter of God, even Wisdom, is not only masculine but father, sowing and begetting in souls aptness to learn, discipline,

3.3.4 *The Cherubim as Paradigm for Human Marriage and the Original Androgynous Man*

Finally, the embracing cherubim in the Temple represented a paradigm for human marriages, itself patterned after God's male-female image.[32] We have seen how for Philo the cherubim symbolized the union of God's male and female aspects. Derivatively, it was known from the Genesis creation accounts that God created man in His "image and likeness" as "male and female" who were immediately commanded to be joined in the nuptial union in order to "be fruitful and multiply" (Gen 1:26–28). The implication is that God Himself is "male and female" who is "fruitful" and "multiplies." The biblical relation and similarity between the image of God, the image of man, and their common fruitfulness is further highlighted by the use of the same language to describe both God's creation of Adam and Adam's begetting of Seth: "[Adam] begot a son *in his own likeness, after his image*" (Gen 5:3).[33]

Philo is consistent with both the earlier pentateuchal account and the later rabbinic views holding that the union of man and woman reflects the divine nature. Borrowing from Plato,[34] Philo argues that in the beginning, before Eve was taken out of Adam, the original man was bisexual or androgynous, with the two halves (male and female) perfectly united into one. It is the subsequent separation out of this original unity that is at the root of the sexual attraction of each side for the missing half. The first human (created in Gen 1:26–27) was thus a complete and harmonious person at a "pre-sexual stage," free from inner distractions and tensions, belonging to the intelligible world and reflecting the Divine Nature in His perfectly united male and female identity. By contrast, the man created in Gen 2:7 belongs to the sense-perceptible world:

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knowledge, sound sense, good and laudable actions." (*De fug. inv*. 49–52; also *De Abr*. 100–102). Cf. Horsley, "Spiritual Marriage with Sophia," 34–35.

32 Seaich, *A Great Mystery*, 19–22.

33 The tradition that the marital embrace of husband and wife was a human reenactment of the divine male-female union and fecundity is also preserved in the rabbinic tradition underlining the reason for the divine imperative for marriage: "He who does not marry thereby diminishes the image of God" (*t. Yebamot* 8:4). This was based on the belief that the *Shekhinah* abides between the worthy husband and wife. The correlation between human marriage and the divine *hieros gamos* between God and the *Shekhinah* became especially developed in the medieval *Zohar* and in the Kabbalah, but these later sources will not concern us here.

34 In the *Symposium* (189–93), Plato preserved a myth about the primal separation of the sexes which resulted in each half constantly seeking his partner to be grafted again into a single person. Cf. Batey, "The μία σάρξ Union of Christ and the Church," 274.

> There is a vast difference between the man thus formed [in Gen 2:7] and the man that came into existence earlier [in Gen 1:26–27] after the image of God: for the man so formed is an object of sense-perception, partaking already of such or such quality, consisting of body and soul, man or woman, by nature mortal; while he that was after the (Divine) image was an idea or type or seal, an object of thought (only), incorporeal, neither male nor female, by nature incorruptible. (*De op. mundi* 134)
>
> Having first fashioned man as a genus, in which the prophet says that there is the male and the female genus, He afterwards makes Adam, the finished form or species. (*Legum allegoriae* 2:13)[35]

3.4 Summary: The Cherubim and Philo's Nuptial Symbolism

Philo considered the two cherubim in the Temple to be a symbol of the male-female aspects of the divinity *ad intra* which united God and Lord, Father and Mother, Husband and Wife, Begetter and Bearer, Creator and Nurturer, Reason and Wisdom. This theosophical dualism, inspired by wisdom literature's sacred marriage between God and Wisdom, constitutes the earliest indication that the two cherubim consisted in a male and a female figure.[36] At the same time, for Philo the male-female dynamism *ad intra* within the divinity was a reflection of God's/Wisdom's relationship with men *ad extra* (as a precursor of the Talmud's cherubim representing the love between God and Israel) and also of the original unity of the first male-female human person.

Philo's nuptial symbolism grew out of the prophetic and wisdom tradition that saw the story of the relationship between God and Israel as a drama played out in the nation's history. The Alexandrian's own nuptial symbolism, however, is not so much *historical* as primarily *mystical*, chiefly interested in how the individual can obtain divine virtues through union with God via his surrogate Wisdom, both symbolized by the cherubim. Still, Philo's nuptial symbolism is

35 Cf. also *De op. mundi* 76, 151–52; *Quis rer. div. heres.* 164; *Quest. Gen.* 1:25–26. On Philo's teaching of the "two men" of Gen 1:26–27 and Gen 2:7, cf. Scroggs, *The Last Adam*, 115–122; Levison, *Portraits of Adam in Early Judaism*, 63–88; Sterling, "'Wisdom among the Perfect,'" 362–364; Runia, *Philo of Alexandria. On the Creation of the Cosmos according to Moses*, 321–29, 354–61; Seaich, *A Great Mystery*, 48–49; Bouteneff, *Beginnings*, 29–30.

36 As Patai (*The Hebrew Goddess*, 78) suggests, it is possible that when Philo made his pilgrimage to the Jerusalem Temple he saw the cherubim intertwined like husband and wife that were exposed to the public as described in the Talmud. This could have influenced him to represent the two divine potencies of goodness and sovereignty as male and female who "mingled and united" by using the figures of the cherubim.

not devoid of a historical aspect, with Wisdom joining herself to the righteous of Israel throughout the nation's history. As the primeval setting of the cherubim was the Edenic paradise, so Wisdom, inviting men to embrace her in imitation of the cherubim, also originates in Paradise. Philo associates Wisdom with the plants, trees, and river of Eden. Paradise is a symbol of wisdom (*Quest. Gen*. 1:6, 8), representative of the virtues that she imparts to men:

> And he gives the name of Eden, which is by interpretation "delight," to the wisdom of the Existent, because no doubt wisdom is a source of delight to God and God to wisdom. (*De Somniis* 2:241–242)[37]

As the guardians of paradise in which Wisdom dwelt, the cherubim were "overseers of wisdom, like a mirror" (*Quest. Gen*. 1.57). In addition, by virtue of her presence in Eden, Wisdom is associated with the creation of Adam and Eve, their original androgynous unity and subsequent separation. Moreover, Philo hints at traces of God's nuptial activity with His people throughout their history. He sowed "the ideas of immortal and virgin virtues" into Sarah, Leah, Rebecca, and Zipporah (*De cherub*. 45–47, 52). Moses himself was impregnated by the seed of "inspired and heaven-bestowed wisdom" (*De cong. erud. gratia* 130–32).[38] Even the rock that provided honey for the Israelites in the desert (cf. Deut 32:13) expresses the "solid and indestructible wisdom of God, which feeds and nurses and rears to sturdiness all who yearn after imperishable sustenance."[39] And the Edenic association between the cherubim and Wisdom is also reflected in the Temple. Drawing upon the motif of wisdom

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37 Philo attributes virtues to both the Tree of Life and the Tree of Knowledge: "But in the divine paradise all plants are endowed with soul or reason, bearing the virtues for fruit, and beside these insight and discernment that never fail . . . Moses evidently signifies by the paradise the ruling power of the soul which is full of countless opinions, as it might be of plants; and by the tree of life he signifies reverence toward God, the greatest of the virtues, by means of which the soul attains to immortality; while by the tree that is cognisant of good and evil things he signifies moral prudence, the virtue that occupies the middle position, and enables us to distinguish things by nature contrary the one to the other" (*De op. mundi* 153–154). Cf. also *Legum allegoriae* 1:43–87; *De plant*. 36–38; *De migr. Abr*. 37–38; *Quest. Gen*. 1:11. On the connection between wisdom and Eden, cf. Laporte, "Philo in the Tradition of Biblical Wisdom Literature," 125–27.

38 In contrast to prophetic, wisdom and rabbinic literature, however, Philo attributes no particular nuptial significance to the Exodus or Sinai theophany.

39 Philo continues: "For this divine wisdom has appeared as mother of all that are in the world, affording to her offspring, as soon as they are born, the nourishment which they require from her own breasts" (*Quod det. pot. insid. soleat* 115–16).

literature suggesting that Wisdom was chiefly found in the Temple,[40] Philo even says that the Tabernacle/Temple was a model of Wisdom or divine virtue:

> When God willed to send down the image of divine excellence from heaven to earth in pity for our race, that it should not lose its share in the better lot, he constructs as a symbol of the truth the holy tabernacle and its contents to be a representation and copy of wisdom. (*Quis rer. div. heres.* 112)[41]

Likewise, the virtue of man, attained by means of the joining of the cherubim, is also considered to be "an imitation, a copy made after the model of that divine tabernacle."[42] Philo's "eschatological thrust" is thus not so much concerned with the course of human history as with the progress of the soul towards perfection in virtue. It is, so to speak, a *mystical eschatology*.[43] Finally, the cherubim of Eden, infatuated with a "winged and heavenly love" for each other (*De cherub*. 20) symbolizing God's union with Wisdom, not only keep banished man out of Eden. As symbols of Wisdom's union with the soul they also invite man *back in* through the divine impregnation of virtue in the Tabernacle/Temple. As Seaich writes, for Philo:

> Mankind experiences through a vision of the cherubim what he had lost in the Garden of Eden, being restored to the Tree of Life and companionship of God's presence.[44]

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40 Cf. Sir 24:8–10; 51:14 and above, p. 33.

41 Cf. also *Legum allegoriae* 3:46; *De cong. erud. gratia* 116–117. On the association of wisdom and the Tabernacle in Philo, cf. Laporte, "Philo in the Tradition of Biblical Wisdom Literature," 121–22.

42 *De cherub*. 29; *Quod det. pot. insid. soleat* 160–61; cf. Seaich, *A Great Mystery*, 64.

43 As Schenck states: "Philo's thought was clearly more 'vertical' than 'horizontal.' That is to say, his writings are far more preoccupied with the relationship between earth and heaven, humanity and God, body and soul, than with the direction of history or with some specific destiny for Israel. His primary teachings relate to issues such as attaining a vision of God, gaining wisdom and virtue, and eliminating one's passions" (Schenck, *A Brief Guide to Philo*, 38). Nevertheless, in the same discussion (pp. 37–41), Schenck shows that Philo's thought is not entirely devoid of eschatology.

44 Seaich, *A Great Mystery*, 63.

CHAPTER 4

Nuptial Symbolism in the New Testament

4.1 The New Testament: Introduction

The marriage between God and Israel undergoes a significant development in the NT as it is metamorphosed into the espousals of Christ and the Church. Yet this transformation represents more of an organic growth than a break with the Jewish tradition out of which Christian nuptial symbolism was born. Only later, with the development of patristic theology, will Christian nuptial symbolism become explicitly supercessionist, claiming that God/Christ put away his former bride Israel and replaced her with the Church. In the NT's nuptial passages, however, the Church is not usually portrayed as a rival to Israel but rather as her historical continuation. In addition to this ecclesial nuptial symbolism, the NT authors also borrow many motifs from Wisdom literature that are discernable in the mystical marriage imagery between Christ and the soul of the individual believer. It is also in the NT that we find some of the earliest known allegorical use of the Song of Songs. As mentioned in our introduction, we will examine in this chapter two Gospels (Matthew, John), three Pauline epistles (First/Second Corinthians, Ephesians), and the Apocalypse of John.[1]

4.2 The Gospel of Matthew: The Bridegroom and the Kingdom

All four evangelists have Jesus matter-of-factly refer to himself as "the bridegroom" whose friends and followers rejoice in his presence, without any preparation or explanation as to the grounds of this identity. The nuptial motif is introduced in the synoptics within the context of the question on fasting. Matthew adds two nuptial parables, both eschatologically orientated: in the parable of the wedding feast (Matt 22:1–14), the kingdom of heaven is compared to a sumptuous wedding feast prepared by a king for his son, to which all people of good will are invited; the parable of the ten virgins (Matt 25:1–13) is an eschatological exhortation to watchfulness for the Church in preparation for the *parousia* of Christ the bridegroom. Still,

1 On the methodological choice to proceed according to the narrative order (Gospels, Pauline epistles, Revelation) rather than the strictly chronological order (Pauline corpus, Synoptics, Johannine corpus), cf. above, p. 50 n. 90.

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Matthew's treatment of nuptial symbolism is relatively light. Our analysis will therefore be brief, to leave more space for the richer and more complex nuptial imagery of the Fourth Gospel.

4.2.1 *The Question on Fasting* (*Matt 9:14–15*)

The question on fasting appears in the three synoptic gospels with only minor variations between them.[2] When the disciples of John (and of the Pharisees in Mark) ask Jesus why his disciples do not fast like they do, he replies with a rhetorical question:[3]

> Can the friends of the bridegroom (οἱ υἱοὶ τοῦ νυμφῶνος) mourn [fast] as long as the bridegroom is with them? [As long as they have the bridegroom with them they cannot fast.] But the days will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast [in those days]. (Matt 9:15; cf. Mark 2:19)

Some exegetes see in this *logion* a simple parable comparing the coming of the messianic kingdom with the joy of a marriage feast.[4] The time of the eschatological wedding between YHWH and Israel has come, and by its very nature it excludes fasting and mourning. For a majority of exegetes, however, the passage is eminently Christological. According to Matthew and Mark, Jesus is comparing himself to a bridegroom, and it is his very presence that turns the scene into a joyful wedding feast.[5] Thus for the synoptics the equation "era of the Messiah = era of the espousals" presupposes "Messiah = bridegroom."[6] As we have seen, the wedding feast is a common metaphor used by the prophets to describe the age of salvation, a time of great rejoicing when the ascetic practices of fasting and mourning are inappropriate and even

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2 Mark 2:18–20; Matt 9:14–15; Luke 5:33–35. We focus here on Matthew's text, with the words unique to Mark added in square brackets. Cf. also Gospel of Thomas 104.

3 In accordance with the methodology that I have outlined above (p. 54), and in order to avoid overly cumbersome language, my references to Jesus' words and actions always refer to the *narrated Jesus* – here, obviously *Matthew's* Jesus. In conformity with this narrative approach, questions pertaining to source analysis or to the historical Jesus will not be considered in the present study.

4 E.g. Jeremias, "νύμφη, νυμφίος," *TDNT* 4, 1103. *Ibid*., *The Parables of Jesus*, 52; Kari Syreeni, "From the Bridegroom's Time to the Wedding of the Lamb: Nuptial Imagery in the Canonical Gospels and the Book of Revelation," in Nissinen & Uro, *Sacred Marriages*, 344–48.

5 Hagner, *Matthew 1–13*, 240–45; Harrington, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 128–29; Guelich, *Mark 1–8:26*, 106–117. Davies & Allison, *The Gospel according to Saint Matthew* II, 107–117.

6 Cf. Infante, *Lo sposo e la sposa*, 85.

unthinkable. Whereas John's disciples and the Pharisees fast as a sign of repentance and contrition in preparation for the coming of the messianic kingdom – and perhaps as a way to hasten the Messiah's coming, the presence of Jesus is understood as the joyous sign that both have already arrived, and the "new wine" (Matt 9:17) indicates that the festivities are already under way.

The context of the question on fasting is significant. In all three synoptics, the passage follows the calling of Levi/Matthew and the banquet at his house where Jesus eats with tax collectors and sinners, drawing the ire of the Pharisees (Matt 9:9–13; Mark 2:13–17; Luke 5:27–32). In response to their grumbling, Jesus quotes Hosea 6:6: "I desire mercy and not sacrifice"(Matt 9:13). This leads to the question on fasting and then to the passage where Jesus contrasts the old garment/wineskins with the new wine/wineskins (Matt 9:16–17; Mark 2:21–22; Luke 5:36–39). Harrington sees in the Hosea quotation a sort of "Matthean slogan" in the conflict between the Matthean community and the Pharisees, where the term "sacrifice" could have alluded to "the Pharisaic program of extending the rules of ritual purity for priests in the Jerusalem Temple to all Israel."[7] The feasting at Matthew's table and reference to the Temple sacrifices juxtaposed to the question on fasting, the announcement of the bridegroom's presence, and the contrast between old wineskins and new wine/wineskins may possibly imply a cultic significance to Jesus' self-identification as bridegroom: thus the "old wine" relates to pre-70 Judaism, its Temple service and Messianic expectation, while the "new wine" means the arrival of the bridegroom-Messiah with the new law and new cult centered around him. The wine's common association in the OT and early Judaism with covenantal feasting, Torah, Temple sacrifices, nuptial love and the celebration of the eschatological age[8] helps to reinforce the historical dimension of the bridegroom's presence as the culmination of salvation history, following the long time of expectation of the "old order" centered around the Temple.[9]

The bridegroom is thus already with his people – but only for a short time, for the next verse marks a shift from his current presence to the expectation of a future absence: "But the days will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast" (Matt 9:15; Mark 2:20). It has been suggested that this allusion to Jesus' disappearance is an *ex eventu* prophecy

7 Harrington, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 129.

8 See the discussions on Lady Wisdom's Banquet (above, p. 73) and on the symbolism of wine (below, p. 138).

9 The cultic significance of the wine is commonly acknowledged in the Wedding at Cana narrative in John 2 (see below), but rarely recognized in the context of the question on fasting.

and a product of the early Church referring back to the Passion and death of Jesus.[10] Guelich writes that "whereas [Mark] 2:19 is a statement about the presence of the new age embodied in the presence and company of the bridegroom, 2:20 is essentially a passion prediction of the loss of the bridegroom."[11] If the present time is one of rejoicing in the bridegroom's presence, the text announces a moment when he will be removed, perhaps by force, and only then will come the time for fasting and asceticism.

Is Matthew attributing to Jesus the role of the divine bridegroom of the OT? If this cannot be ascertained with confidence from the immediate context, there are reasons to believe that this is the case, especially in light of Matthew's parable of the ten virgins where Christ's glorious *parousia* is clearly depicted as a coming of the bridegroom.[12] The idea of the bridegroom-Messiah would be a new development of an old idea because it is foreign to the OT and to the literature of Second Temple Judaism.[13] The idea is found in later texts such as the Targums on the Song of Songs and on Ps 45,[14] and it is possible that these drew upon earlier traditions. The main difference between those texts and the gospel is the absence of the bride in the latter. Jesus' disciples are not the bride but merely the friends of the bridegroom, or literally "sons of the bride-chamber" (οἱ υἱοὶ τοῦ νυμφῶνος, or בני החופה).[15] We thus cannot properly speak here of a marriage between God/Christ and his followers, but can only conjecture that Jesus' possible identification with the divine bridegroom in Matthew could have provided a foundation for the later development of the idea of the Church as bride.

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10 Cf. Mann, *Mark*, 234; Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus*; Dodd, *The Parables of the Kingdom*, 87, n. 5.

11 Guelich, *Mark 1–8:26*, 114.

12 See below, p. 116.

13 Cf. Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus*, 52; *ibid*. "νύμφη, νυμφίος," *TDNT* 4, 1101–02.

14 The bride's exclamation to her bridegroom in Cant 8:1, "*Oh, that you were like my brother, who nursed at my mother's breasts!*" is rendered by the Targum as "At that time when King Messiah is revealed to the Congregation of Israel, they will say to Him, 'Come, be as a brother to us and let us go up to Jerusalem, and let us suck with you the judgments of the Law, just as a suckling sucks at his mother's breast.'" Ps 45:2a, "*You are fairer than the sons of men*," is rendered by the Targum as "Your beauty, O King Messiah, is greater than the sons of men." Cf. Pesiq. R. 149a; Feuillet, "La synthèse eschatologique de Saint Matthieu," 73, n. 5.

15 Cf. *t. Ber*. 2.10; *b. Sukkah* 25b.

4.2.2 *Jesus' Teachings on Marriage* (*Matt 19:3–12*)

Even though Jesus' teachings on marriage and divorce do not fall into the category of nuptial allegory *per se*, a brief review of them is in order here because they shed light on the nuptial symbolism employed elsewhere by the NT authors.[16] In Matt 19:3–12,[17] Jesus castigates the laxity of the Pharisees' interpretation of the Torah in matters of divorce (cf. Deut 24:1), grounding his argument on the basis of the original unity of Adam and Eve described in Gen 1:27 and 2:24. The implication is three-fold: first, marriage is rooted in creation and in the very origin of mankind; second, the one-flesh union between man and woman creates a substantial unity and interpersonal communion between them at the deepest level of their being; third, in the sexual union, God permanently joins the two parties in such a way that they must no longer be separated: "Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate" (Matt 19:6). By reminding his listeners that "from the beginning it was not so" (Matt 19:8), Jesus contrasts the Law of Moses permitting divorce with a more primitive and pristine "Law of Eden" where divorce was unheard of, and he calls for a return to this original and superior understanding of marriage. When one adds to these two dispensations the new restored economy of marriage that Jesus himself institutes, and the final eschatological state when marriage as we know it will cease, one distinguishes four periods in the history of the institution of marriage:[18]

1) The original state in paradise as God intended it, where Adam and Eve became "one flesh." The divinely ordained original unity provides the ground for the indissolubility of marriage: "what God has joined together, let not man separate."
2) A "period of compromise" under the Mosaic Law, when divorce was allowed because of man's "hardness of heart."
3) A new period introduced by Jesus that returns to the original order of creation and to the elementary unity and inviolability of marriage.
4) The time of the resurrection where "they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels of God in heaven." (Matt 22:30; Mark 12:25)

Human marriage is therefore one of the institutions of the present age that finds its origins in creation, was wounded by sin and became subject to temporary and imperfect regulations under the Torah, was restored by the coming

16 Paul especially seems to take these teachings for granted. Cf. 1 Cor 6:15–20 and below, p. 194f.

17 And parallels Matt 5:31–32; Mark 10:2–12; Luke 16:18; cf. also 1 Cor 7:10–11.

18 Cf. E. Stauffer, "γαμέω, γάμος," *TDNT* 1 (1964), 648–53.

of the Messiah, and will eventually pass away in the world to come. This model seems closely related to our "four nuptial moments" of early Jewish thought. As we shall see, Jesus' four-fold scheme of human marriage as recorded by Matthew will also form the underlying foundation for the divine-human marriage between Christ and the Church as developed especially in the Johannine and Pauline writings.

4.2.3 *The Parable of the Wedding Feast* (*Matt 22:1–14*)

In Matt 22:1–14, the kingdom of heaven is compared to a sumptuous wedding feast prepared by a king for his son, to which all are invited.[19] No expenses are spared, and the oxen and fatted calf are killed in honor of the guests, an action which underlines the abundance of the feast and generosity of the king. But the generous invitation transmitted twice by the king's servants is met first with apathy and then with hostility on the part of the invitees, who go on with their business or mistreat and kill the monarch's envoys. The outraged king sends armies to destroy the offenders and burn their city in retaliation, after which he sends more servants to invite "all whom they found, both bad and good" to the wedding feast. But when a guest is found without wedding garment he is rejected and cast into the "outer darkness."

Matthew's comparison of the kingdom of God with a banquet, implicit in the pericope of the question of fasting (given its juxtaposition with Levi's banquet), is made explicit here. Harrington suggests as background to the parable the invitation to Lady Wisdom's sacred banquet in Proverbs, where She slaughters her meat, mixes her wine, furnishes her table, sends out her maidens and invites all to her feast (Prov 9:1).[20] But if in Proverbs Wisdom sends out the invitations to her feast, in Matthew it is the king who invites the guests on behalf of his son. Feuillet ties the parable to the messianic feast of the prophets (e.g. Isa 25:6–8 and 55:1–5) where the Lord freely offers an abundance of delightful foods to all people on Mount Zion.[21] He also sees connections with the feast of the lovers in Cant 8:1–2, which the Targum interprets as the "Feast of Leviathan" that Israel will share with the King-Messiah in his eschatological Temple. The late dating of the Targum notwithstanding, it is not

19 The parable is very similar to the parable of the great supper in Luke 14:15–24. Luke, however, leaves out the marriage motif. Cf. also Gospel of Thomas 64. Cf. Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus*, 63, 176; Harrington, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 305–309; Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 624–32; Davies & Allison, *The Gospel according to Saint Matthew* III, 193–209.

20 Harrington, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 307. Cf. also Feuillet, "Les épousailles messianiques et les références au Cantique des Cantiques dans les Évangiles Synoptiques," 207.

21 Feuillet, "Les épousailles messianiques," 205–207.

impossible that it reflects an early oral tradition that was already known in the first century.[22]

The main point of the parable is the choice between rejecting or accepting the king's invitation to the wedding feast. As Jeremias notes, Matthew is allegorically alluding to the rejection of the prophets and persecution of the apostles by the Jews or Jewish leaders, who treat with contempt the invitation to salvation extended to them. As a result, they must suffer the dire consequence of seeing Jerusalem (and the Temple) burned. The new guests gathered from the streets might refer to the marginal people within Israel (the "tax collectors and sinners"), or perhaps the gentiles who have received the gospel. The wedding feast is the eschatological day of salvation; the king's inspection of the guests is the last judgment; the "wedding garment" could refer to the righteous deeds of the saints;[23] and the "outer darkness" – to hell. Matthew has thus "transformed our parable into an outline of the plan of redemption from the appearance of the prophets, embracing the fall of Jerusalem, up to the Last Judgment."[24] Both the bridegroom and bride, however, remain in the shadows. All we know about the wedding party is that the bridegroom is the king's son. This is a clear reference to Jesus, given his identity as Son of God elsewhere in the gospel and as bridegroom in 9:15 and 25:1, his identification with the son in the previous parable (of the vineyard and wicked tenants), and God's role as king in Matthew.[25]

The parable of the wedding feast is a miniature depiction of salvation history, with the wedding banquet as its final eschatological goal. The historical dimension is visible in the role of the rejected servants as the prophets of the past and apostles of the present; the destruction of the city emphasizes the break between the original invitees (the Jews or their leaders) and the guests found on the highways (those who have accepted the Gospel). Since the community of the saved are portrayed in the parable as the wedding guests and not as bride, however, here also we cannot speak of a *hieros gamos* proper between Christ and his followers.

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22 Feuillet, "Les épousailles messianiques," 207–209, and below, p. 353.

23 Infante (*Lo sposo e la sposa*, 87–88) notes that the wedding garment recalls Rev 19:7b–8 and *b. Shabb*. 153a.

24 Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus*, 69. Cf. Batey, *New Testament Nuptial Imagery*, 43.

25 Cf. Matt 3:17; 8:29; 14:33; 16:16; 21:33–46. Cf. Davies & Allison, *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, vol. 3, 198–99.

4.2.4 *The Parable of the Ten Virgins* (*Matt 25:1–13*)

The parable of the ten virgins (Matt 25:1–13)[26] is the last occurrence of the nuptial motif in the Gospel of Matthew, this time presented as an eschatological exhortation to watchfulness for the Church in preparation for the *parousia* of Christ.[27] The parable is placed in the midst of a long section on eschatological events: it is preceded by Jesus' discourse on the destruction of the Temple, the end times and the coming of the Son of Man, and the parable of the good and wicked servants (Matt 24:1–51), and followed by the parable of the talents and the last judgment scene (Matt 25:14–46). The central message of these two chapters is watchfulness in preparation for the coming of the Son of Man.

In our parable, ten virgins await the bridegroom's arrival with their lamps, presumably outside in the dark. According to the customs of Jewish weddings at the time, the scene takes place at the groom's house. The bridegroom has gone to the house of the bride's father to get her and bring her to his house, where the bridal table and chamber are ready.[28] Five of the virgins are wise and take sufficient oil with them to last through the night as they wait, but the other five virgins are foolish and neglect to take enough oil. Caught by surprise by the bridegroom's sudden arrival, they must rush away to buy oil, but they are left in front of closed doors after the wise virgins have gone to the wedding feast with the bridegroom.

Here the context makes it clear that the bridegroom is Christ, the Son of Man whose glorious coming was just described in the previous chapter. The other elements of the allegory are relatively easy to identify: the ten maidens are the community of believers waiting for Christ, the bridegroom' delay is the postponement of the parousia, his sudden coming is the unexpected coming of the Son of Man, the foolish maidens left behind the closed door symbolize the last judgment, and perhaps the foolish virgins represent Israel and the wise ones the Gentiles.[29]

This parable may be the nuptial passage in the synoptics which comes closest to alluding to the YHWH-Israel marriage. The torch-light entrance of the bridegroom was known in early Judaism as a metaphor of YHWH coming

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26 Cf. Harrington, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 347–51; Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 725–30; Davies & Allison, *The Gospel according to Saint Matthew* III, 391–401; Puig i Tarrech, *La Parabole des dix vierges* (*Mt 25, 1–13*).

27 Compare the parable of the king's eschatological banquet in *b. Shab.* 153a, which has much in common with both Matt 22 and Matt 25.

28 Harrington, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 36–37, 349; Jeremias, "νύμφη, νυμφίος," *TDNT* 4, 1100. For ancient Jewish marriage customs, cf. de Vaux, *Ancient Israel: Social Institutions*, 24–38; Safrai, *The Jewish People in the First Century*, 2:752–60.

29 Harrington, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 349.

to meet his bride Israel.[30] Moreover, Feuillet notes several affinities between the parable and Cant 5:2–8: the Canticle's bride sleeps, as do the virgins in Matthew; yet the bride's heart is awake, and the virgins keep their light lit; in both cases the bridegroom appears in the middle of the night; in both cases his arrival is announced with a voice/a cry; the Canticle's bride is not ready and is slow to open the door, and the foolish virgins are caught unprepared; when the bride finally opens the door, and when the virgins return, it is too late: the bridegroom has gone away.[31] These parallels seem close enough to warrant some intertextual relationship between Matthew and the Canticle.

This parable, as the previous one, is peculiar insofar as the bride is absent from the story.[32] Jesus' followers are represented not by the bride but rather by the ten virgins, perhaps as a sign of their call to purity, holiness, and consecration – though evidently this calling does not guarantee their automatic entrance into the wedding feast. There may be a correlation here with Paul's depiction of the Corinthian church as a "chaste virgin" who is in danger of being distracted and led astray from her devotion to Christ her bridegroom (2 Cor 11:2–3).[33] Several ancient and modern authors, in fact, have suggested that the bride in Matthew's parable should be identified with the ten virgins.[34]

It is also significant that the parable of the ten virgins depicting the coming of the bridegroom immediately follows Jesus' eschatological discourse in chapter 24 where he dramatically describes the destruction of the Temple that will precede the coming of the Son of Man. The depiction of the "abomination of desolation" standing in the holy place shortly before its destruction, accompanied by the coming of many false Messiahs, symbolizes the ultimate desecration of the holy dwelling of God and stands in stark contrast to the coming of the bridegroom and joyous wedding feast of chapter 25. This

30 *Mekh* on Exod 19:17 interpretes Deut 33:2 (YHWH came from Sinai . . . at His right hand was a fiery law unto them) as: "like a bridegroom who goes to meet the bride." Cf. Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus*, p. 172.

31 Feuillet, "La synthèse eschatologique de Saint Matthieu," 74–77. See also Winandy, "Le Cantique des Cantiques et le Nouveau Testament," 166; Infante, *Lo sposo e la sposa*, 89–90.

32 A small number of manuscripts add "and the bride" at the end of Matt 25:1 ("[The ten virgins] went out to meet the bridegroom *and the bride*."). If this reading is preferred, then the virgins accompany the bridal couple from the house of the bride to the house of the bridegroom, as was the established custom. Jeremias suggests that if the longer reading is original, the words "and the bride" may have been later cut out because they seemed to contradict the allegorical interpretation of the bride as the community. In favor of the shorter reading, only the bridegroom is mentioned in v. 5 and v. 6. Cf. J. Jeremias, "νύμφη, νυμφίος," *TDNT* 4, 1100.

33 See section 4.5.6 below, p. 211.

34 Cf. Infante, *Lo sposo e la sposa*, 90.

creates a dramatic juxtaposition of the chaotic and destructive end of the old cultic order with the expectation and preparation required for the arrival of the new.

4.2.5 *Temple and* Shekhinah (*Matt 12:6; 18:20; 26:61*)

It is worth mentioning another motif in Matthew (and Mark) that is not nuptial *per se*, but will prove to be useful later in our study. This motif is the identification of Jesus with the Temple and divine presence (the *Shekhinah*), an identification that will prepare the way for our treatment of nuptial imagery in the Gospel of John and its many inter-connections between nuptiality, divine presence, and Temple worship. Both Matthew and Mark attribute to Jesus the claim that he was in some way superior to the Jerusalem Temple, or that he would "rebuild it in three days."[35] In Mark, false witnesses at Jesus' trial mention that the new Temple he intended to build would be "made without hands" (Mark 14:58) – and thus a spiritual temple. In Matthew, Jesus claims to be "one greater than the Temple" (Matt 12:6), and the ripping of the Temple veil from top to bottom at the time of his death is commonly interpreted as signifying the opening of the way to God's formerly inaccessible presence in the Holy of Holies.[36]

In addition, it is probable that Matthew identifies Jesus with the tangible presence of God among His people that later became known as the *Shekhinah*. In Matt 18:20 Jesus is recorded as saying: "where two or three are gathered together in my name, I am there in the midst of them." We find a couple of very similar statements in the Mishnah. The first is attributed to Rabbi Ĥananya ben-Teradyon: "when two [people] sit down [together] and there are words of Torah between them the *Shekhinah* is with them." A few mishnahs lower Rabbi Ĥalafta ben-Dosa states: "When ten people sit down and occupy themselves with Torah the *Shekhinah* rests among them." The rabbi proceeds to argue that not ten people are necessary to usher in the *Shekhinah*'s presence, but five, three, two or even just one devout person, for "in every place where I cause

35 Matt 26:61; 27:40; Mark 14:58; 15:29. The same claim in the Fourth Gospel will be studied below, section 4.3.3, p. 144.

36 Matt 27:51; Mark 15:38; Luke 23:45; cf. also Heb 6:19, 9:3, 10:19–20. In his commentary on Mark 15:38, Mann (*Mark*, 653) writes: "Symbolically there is agreement that the language signifies an end and a new beginning, perhaps the end of the temple system, but certainly and more importantly (as so well articulated by Hebrews) the opening of the way to God through the ministry and self-offering of Jesus (cf. Isa 64:1)." Albright and Mann (*Matthew*, 352) also recall the incident in the Talmud (*b. Yoma* 39b) where the doors of the temple are said to have opened of their own accord for forty years before the fall of Jerusalem as a sign of its impending destruction.

My name to be mentioned I will come to you and bless you."[37] The striking similarity of language between the statements in the Gospel and in the Mishnah certainly points to a relationship between them. If the sayings of the Tannaitic sages were known oral traditions circulating in the first century, it is probable that Matthew purposefully employed this language to identify Jesus with both the Torah and the *Shekhinah*[38] – an idea that will be developed in the Johannine and Pauline writings.

4.2.6 *Summary: Nuptial Imagery in the Gospel of Matthew*

If Matthew clearly portrays Jesus as bridegroom, it is not entirely obvious that he is thereby transferring to him YHWH's role of divine bridegroom (with the possible exception of the parable of the ten virgins). True, the parables seem to reflect the well-known OT theme of the marriage between God and Israel, and Jesus could be thought of as "the messianic bridegroom of Israel."[39] Yet the conspicuous absence of the bride and the fact that the community of believers is usually given another role in the nuptial parables and sayings (friends of the bridegroom, guests, virgins) should make us cautious in seeing a fully thought-out marriage between Christ and his disciples in Matthew.[40] As for the historical component of Matthew's nuptial symbolism, its focus is on realized eschatology (the presence of the bridegroom during Jesus' ministry, which excludes fasting), the prediction of his future absence (which calls for fasting, watching and waiting – this is the "now" of Matthew's original readers), and

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37 *M. Avot* 3:2 (emphasis mine): "שְׁנַיִם שֶׁיּוֹשְׁבִין וְיֵשׁ בֵּינֵיהֶם דִּבְרֵי תוֹרָה שְׁכִינָה שְׁרוּיָה בֵּינֵיהֶם"; cf. also *m. Avot* 3:7, quoting Exod 20:21, and *Mekh BaHodesh* 11 (Laut. II:287).

38 It is also possible that Matthew 18:20 is the earliest known attestation of what later became a *topos* in Jewish tradition. It seems unlikely, however, that Matthew was the originator of this saying, and that the Sages later identified it with the *Shekhinah* as a polemical device against Christians, for by doing this they would have taken a relatively meaningless gospel verse and literally charged it with meaning by associating Jesus with the divine presence – something quite contrary to their interest. It seems more plausible that the saying was already known at the time when Matthew wrote his gospel, and that he purposefully rephrased it to associate Jesus with the *Shekhinah*. For a fuller treatment of Jesus as the *Shekhinah*, see Bouyer, "La Schekinah, Dieu avec nous."

39 Cf. Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, 156.

40 Muirhead ("The Bride of Christ," 183) is probably overly optimistic in stating that "it was in the mind of Jesus Himself that the transformation of the OT symbol was accomplished by the identification of Himself with a Bridegroom-Messiah. In this identification He drew together the rather indefinite OT image, giving it a much sharper eschatological point. In place of an unfaithful spouse, whose restoration might well only be a prelude for more unfaithfulness, we have the wedding symbol, a boundary event marking a goal, an end, and a beginning."

the final eschatological wedding feast and coming of the bridegroom (the *telos* of the two parables). One notes a certain tension between Matt 9:15, where the day of the wedding banquet is already taking place during the life of Jesus, and Matt 25:1–13, where the festivity awaits his return. Otherwise, Matthew does not tie his nuptial symbolism with salvation history in any particular way, apart from vague innuendos pointing to the OT prophetic tradition. Much different is the nuptial symbolism of the Fourth Gospel, to which we now turn.

4.3 The Gospel of John: Wedding, Bridegroom, and New Temple

At first sight, nuptial passages in the Gospel of John seem rather sparse. A closer examination, however, reveals a profound nuptial symbolism permeating the thought of the evangelist throughout his work. The gospel's prologue, after introducing the topic of Jesus' glory using Temple terminology, shows how the ministry and proclamation of John the Baptist leads to the great nuptial moment of the wedding at Cana where Jesus manifests his glory (John 2:1–12) – a passage displaying strong affinities with the narrative of the Exodus and Sinai theophany. The Cana narrative is juxtaposed with the pericope of Jesus' cleansing of the Temple, where his body is identified as a new Temple (John 2:19–21). This hints at a correlation between nuptial and Temple themes. In chapter 3, John the Baptist declares that Jesus is the bridegroom, his disciples are the "bride," and the Baptist himself is "the friend of the bridegroom" responsible for arranging the wedding (3:29). This is followed by the story of the Samaritan woman at the well, which alludes to the well-known OT "betrothal-type scene" where a man meets a woman at a well and the encounter leads to a marriage (cf. Gen 29:1–20). Here too the nuptial motif is connected with the issue of cult and Temple, with the discussion revolving around the topic of "worship in spirit and in truth." Two other passages have nuptial overtones, namely the anointing at Bethany (12:1–3) in light of Cant 1:12, and the resurrection appearance to Mary Magdelene (20:1–18) in light of Cant 3:1–3. These two allusions to the Canticle, where Christ takes on the role of the Song's lover and thus (probably) of the divine Bridegroom, frame the narrative of the passion and resurrection, which shows signs of having been deliberately constructed by the evangelist as a representation of Christ's "messianic wedding."

4.3.1 *Prologue: The Glory of the Word Made Flesh* (*John 1:1–18*)

Our point of departure for the study of nuptial symbolism in the Fourth Gospel is Jesus' turning of water into wine at Cana as the manifestation of "his glory"

(τὴν δόξαν αὐτοῦ) (John 2:11). This theme of Jesus' glory was already introduced in the Gospel's prologue:

> And the Word became flesh and dwelt (ἐσκήνωσεν) among us, and we beheld His glory (τὴν δόξαν αὐτοῦ), the glory as of the father's only son, full of grace and truth. (John 1:14)

In telling his readers that "the Word became flesh and dwelt among us," John uses the verb ἐσκήνωσεν,[41] evoking the מִשְׁכָּן, the desert Tabernacle (ἡ σκηνή) and home of God's *Shekhinah*, which we have already encountered earlier.[42] Israel hoped that the divine presence would one day transcend the boundaries of a tent or temple structure: Joel had announced that at the great day of judgment God would "dwell in Zion" (שֹׁכֵן בְּצִיּוֹן / ὁ κατασκηνῶν ἐν Σιων) (Joel 3:17), and Zechariah had God promise to the daughter of Zion: וְשָׁכַנְתִּי בְתוֹכֵךְ / καὶ κατασκηνώσω ἐν μέσῳ σου (Zech 2:10). The indwelling of the Logos among us also recalls the passages in wisdom literature where Wisdom is said to dwell among men.[43] In this light, John's use of the verb σκηνόω suggests that Christ's flesh was a tabernacle or tent in which abode the λόγος, his human body becoming the new localization of God's presence on earth and replacement of the ancient tabernacle.[44] It also reflects the idea that Jesus is the divine *Shekhinah* and Wisdom of God, the dwelling place and point of contact

41 The standard verbs meaning "to dwell" or "to inhabit" in the LXX and NT are οἰκέω or κατοικέω. The somewhat rarer σκηνόω or κατασκηνόω is often a translation of שכן, denoting the indwelling of the divine presence in the LXX (e.g. Num 35:34; Ezek 43:7; Joel 3:21; Ps 14:1). In the NT σκηνόω only appears in John 1:14 and in Rev 7:15, 12:12, 13:6, and 21:3, either describing the indwelling of God among His people, or the indwelling of His people in heaven.

42 Cf. above, p. 60, n. 12. For a summary of the rabbinic sayings on the *Shekhinah* and thoughts on the points of contact and mutual influences between early Christian and rabbinic literature on the doctrine of the divine immanence, see Gillet, *Communion in the Messiah*, 81–87. Cf. also "Shekinah" in *IDB* 4:317–19; Bouyer, "La Schekinah, Dieu avec nous;" Patai, *The Hebrew Goddess,* 96–111; Coloe, *God Dwells with Us*, 31–63.

43 Cf. Sir 24:4, 8; 1 En. 42:1–2 and Schnackenburg, *The Gospel According to John* 1:269–70.

44 For treatments of Jesus as new tabernacle and echoes of Exodus in John 1:14–18, cf. Boismard, *St. John's Prologue*, 135–45; Brown, *The Gospel According to John* 1:32–35; Beasley-Murray, *John,* 14–15; Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, 126–34; Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, 90–95; Kerr, *The Temple of Jesus' Body*, 117–26; Coloe, *God Dwells with Us*, 23–27.

between the Father and His people.[45] As Brown writes, "by making his dwelling among men, the Word is acting in the manner of Wisdom."[46]

Given the memory of the divine כָּבוֹד/δόξα that had formerly dwelt in the sanctuary[47] and the identification of Jesus with the מִשְׁכָּן/σκηνή, one gains a better appreciation of John's words "and we beheld his glory" (the glory of the λόγος). After having described how the Word set up a Tabernacle among men in the flesh of Jesus, John states that the δόξα of the new Tabernacle became visible in him. The glory of the *Shekhinah* that was revealed at Sinai and then prevailed in the dwelling place of YHWH is now seen in Jesus.[48] The evangelist's reference to Christ's glory in the prologue and at the Wedding at Cana thus evokes the revelation of God's glory at the time of the Exodus – on Mount Sinai and in the Tent of Meeting (and later in the Jerusalem Temple).[49] At the same time, the relationship between God and the Logos is now expressed as an intimate father-son relationship (1:18).

Brown notes that John 1:14c, "the glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth," is a probable allusion to the tradition of Jesus' Transfiguration recorded in the synoptic gospels. All three synoptic accounts of the Transfiguration report that a cloud overshadowed (ἐπεσκίαζεν) Peter, James and John when Jesus was transfigured, and out of this cloud the voice of the Father called out and declared Jesus to be his "beloved Son."[50] Luke adds that the disciples saw Jesus' *glory* (τὴν δόξαν αὐτοῦ). The verb ἐπισκιάζω[51] is the same one that is used in Exod 40:35, where Moses is said to not have been able to enter the Tabernacle because "the cloud rested (ἐπεσκίαζεν) above it, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle."[52] Also noteworthy is Peter's suggestion to build three tabernacles (σκηνὰς τρεῖς) at the Transfiguration (as

45 Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, 1:33–34.

46 Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, 1:33.

47 Cf. above, p. 61 n. 15.

48 Gillet is probably right in stating that the glory should not be directly equated with the *Shekhinah*, but rather is "an external manifestation or radiance of the Shekinah" perhaps equivalent to the expression *ziv-ha-shekinah*, or "the shining of the Shekinah." Gillet, *Communion in the Messiah*, 84.

49 Beasley-Murray, *John*, 14. Pss. Sol. 17:32 announces that the future royal Son of David will reveal the glory of the Lord to all nations; Cf. 1 Enoch 49:2; Ps 17:32; Ps 97:6; Isa 60:1–2; Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, 105.

50 Matt 17:5; Mark 9:7; Luke 9:35.

51 "to cast a shade upon, i.e. (by analogy) to envelop in a haze of brilliancy; figuratively, to invest with preternatural influence" (Strong's).

52 Apart from the transfiguration narratives, the only other passages in the NT where ἐπισκιάζω is used is when the angel Gabriel announces to Mary that the power of the Most High will "overshadow" (ἐπισκιάσει) her (Luke 1:35), and when the sick seek healing

"dwellings" for the glory that they were witnessing?).[53] Moreover, 2 Peter 1:16–18 refers to the Transfiguration as the time when Jesus "received from God the Father honor and glory (τιμὴν καὶ δόξαν) when such a voice came to Him from the Excellent Glory: 'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.'"

The last words of John 1:14, "full of grace and truth" (χάριτος καὶ ἀληθείας = חֶסֶד וֶאֱמֶת) are another allusion to the Sinai theophany, since this was the moment when God revealed Himself to Moses as "abounding in grace and truth" (רַב־חֶסֶד וֶאֱמֶת) (Exod 34:6). The expression is a witness to God's enduring covenant love which typically underlies the OT manifestations of His glory. Just as the great revelation of this love first took place at Sinai, where the Tabernacle became the dwelling for God's glory, now the supreme revelation of God's covenantal love becomes manifest in the incarnate λόγος, the Word made flesh and new Tabernacle of divine glory. The interconnection but also the contrast between the Sinai covenant mediated by Moses and the New Covenant instituted by Jesus is recapitulated in John 1:17: "For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ." The relation between Moses and Christ, old and new, law and grace, continues to develop in chapter one of the Gospel, in preparation for the Sinai-Cana connection that will unfold in chapter two.

The Fourth Gospel has much more to say concerning the divine δόξα: it repeats that the true glory of God is found in Jesus (5:41–44). It is manifested at the resurrection of Lazarus (11:4, 40). Jesus' death (his "hour") is the time of his glorification, and his glory is intrinsically related to God's love and eternal life (12:23; 13:31–32; 17:1–5, 22–24). At the same time, Jesus already possessed the glory of God the Father "before the foundation of the world," and at the hour when his glory is made manifest he declares his intention to pass it on to his disciples (17:4, 22–24). I will return to the theme of the divine כָּבוֹד/δόξα in the section on the Pauline epistles below, examining how Paul interprets its action in the life of the believer. For now, Brown's words are fitting to conclude the present discussion on the כָּבוֹד made manifest in the λόγος:

> The great exhibition of the enduring covenant love of God in the OT took place at Sinai, the same setting where the Tabernacle became the dwelling for God's glory. So now the supreme exhibition of God's love is the incarnate Word, Jesus Christ, the new Tabernacle of divine glory.[54]

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from Peter and hope that his shadow might "overshadow" (ἐπισκιάσῃ) them (Acts 5:15). Both occurrences refer to a divine and supernatural intervention.

53 Cf. Matt 17:4; Mark 9:5; Luke 9:33.

54 Brown, *The Gospel According to John i–xii*, 35.

4.3.2 *From John the Baptist to the Wedding at Cana* (*John 1:19–2:11*)

4.3.2.1 The Cana Narrative

The discussion on the divine glory of the λόγος has prepared the ground for the study of the first nuptial passage in the Gospel of John, the Wedding of Cana. The story is well known: Jesus, his mother and his disciples are invited to a wedding in Cana of Galilee which takes place "on the third day" (2:1). At some point, the wedding party and guests run out of wine, which prompts Mary to inform Jesus: "They have no wine." His response has left many a modern reader perplexed: "τί ἐμοὶ καὶ σοί, γύναι; οὔπω ἥκει ἡ ὥρα μου" (v. 4). We are not told of any other words exchanged between mother and son, but are informed of her words to the servants of the wedding: "ὅ τι ἂν λέγῃ ὑμῖν ποιήσατε" (v. 5). At Jesus' command, the servants fill with water six large waterpots of stone "according to the manner of purification of the Jews," and after the water is miraculously transformed into wine, Jesus tells them to take some to the master of the feast. Having tasted the miraculous wine, which he "did not know where it came from . . . the master of the feast calls the bridegroom" (2:9) and congratulates him for having kept the best wine until that moment. As the story ends, we are told that this miracle was the "beginning of signs" that Jesus did which "manifested His glory; and His disciples believed in Him" (2:11).

On a first reading, the nuptial theme seems peripheral to the narrative, which chiefly focuses on the miracle of the wine. Jesus is not the bridegroom but only a guest, and the bride is wholly absent from the story (as in the Matthean nuptial passages). Nevertheless, the fact that Jesus is declared to be a bridegroom in the very next chapter (3:29) hints that his role at Cana may be more than that of a simple guest. As several commentators have noted, the fact that Mary tells Jesus about the wine shortage and his taking on the responsibility for averting the crisis by supplying a great abundance of superior wine puts him in the position of the bridegroom, who was traditionally responsible for providing the wine at weddings.[55]

4.3.2.2 The "Third Day" and Jesus' "Hour"

Jesus "manifested his glory" at the wedding at Cana which occurred on "the third day" (τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τῇ τρίτῃ) (John 2:1, 11). This "third day" has naturally been

55 This seems to be a classic example of Johannine irony: while the characters in the story see Jesus as a simple guest, by means of suggestive hints and irony the reader is given a deeper insight into his role in the story. Cf. McWhirter, *The Bridegroom Messiah*, 49: "John hints that the Messiah who provides an abundance of good wine is a bridegroom;" Feuillet, "Les épousailles du Messie," 373; Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, 174; Infante, *Lo sposo e la sposa*, 132. On Jewish marriage customs in rabbinic literature, cf. Strack-Billerbeck, *Kommentar Zum Neuen Testament*, 1:500–17.

taken by commentators as alluding to the manifestation of Christ's glory at the resurrection.[56] The allusion is strengthened by the relation between Cana's "third day" and Jesus' "hour," which is somewhat ambiguous. Should Jesus' words to his mother: "τί ἐμοὶ καὶ σοί, γύναι; οὔπω ἥκει ἡ ὥρα μου" (John 2:4) be interpreted as a statement ("my hour has not yet come") or a rhetorical question ("has my hour not already come?")? If the latter is true, then Jesus' "hour" is the immediate revelation of his glory at Cana (cf. 2:11). This is theoretically possible but unlikely because of the frequent recurrence of Jesus' "hour" later in the gospel as referring to the hour of his death (cf. John 7:30, 8:30) and moment when he is glorified (cf. John 12:23, 27; 13:1; 17:1; 19:27).[57] One could therefore say that Jesus manifests his glory in "two installments," first at Cana and then at the "hour" of his death and resurrection. The two events are intrinsically joined as distinct but related moments when the glory of Jesus is manifested. Perhaps the evangelist meant to portray the manifestation of Christ's glory at Cana as a partial anticipation of the glory that is later to be revealed at the resurrection.[58] Fehribach suggests that Jesus' statement "οὔπω ἥκει ἡ ὥρα μου" at Cana may be an affirmation that the hour of his own *wedding* had not yet come.[59] This possibility will become interesting as we consider the circumstances surrounding Jesus' "hour" at the time of the crucifixion.

Significantly, the evangelist also speaks of an "hour" that will inaugurate a new worship of God "in spirit and in truth" (John 4:21–24), and an "hour" that marks the general resurrection of the dead at the end of days (John 5:25–29). The Fourth Gospel thus refers to four moments related to Jesus' hour: (a) Cana, when the hour has "not yet come" but where an anticipation of Jesus' glory is manifested; (b) Jesus' death and resurrection, which is his "hour" properly speaking; (c) the "hour" when God will be worshiped "in spirit and in truth;" and (d) the final "hour" of the eschatological resurrection of the dead. Jesus' hour thus carries a strong sense of realized eschatology,[60]

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56 Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel*, 300; Schnackenburg, *The Gospel According to John*, Vol. 1, 325; Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, 97; Beasley-Murray, *John*, 34; Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, 167.

57 Schnackenburg, *The Gospel According to John*, Vol. 1, 328–29.

58 On the moment of the revelation of Christ's glory, Brown (*The Gospel According to John* 100–101) writes: "For John the true glory of Jesus is revealed only in 'the hour.' Since 7:39 states clearly that during the ministry Jesus had not yet been glorified, we are to think of 2:11 either as referring to a partial manifestation of glory, or as being part of the capsulizing of the training of the disciples where their whole career, including their sight of the glory of the resurrected Jesus, is foreshadowed." Cf. also pp. 517–18.

59 Cf. Fehribach, *The Women in the Life of the Bridegroom*, 30–31.

60 Although perhaps a more accurate term would be "partially realized eschatology," for the sake of simplicity, I will continue to use the conventional expression "realized eschatol-

of "already but not yet": On the one hand, the miracle at Cana illustrates "Jesus' character as the giver of God's eschatological gifts, here and now" for those who are at the wedding with him.[61] On the other hand, Cana points to the passion, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus, his "hour" properly speaking when he fully manifests his glory. The paschal mystery, in turn, is the moment that will inaugurate the "hour" of the new worship "in spirit and in truth," no longer physically located on Mount Gerizim or in Jerusalem (4:20–24) but characterized by drinking the "living water" of the Holy Spirit that Jesus will provide to his disciples and that will become in them "springs of water welling up to eternal life" (4:14; cf. 7:38). Finally, this mystical Christocentric worship will anticipate the final "hour" of the resurrection of the dead (John 5:25–29).[62]

The historical dimension of Jesus' hour, introduced "on the third day" at the Wedding at Cana, is strengthened by the narrative of the cleansing of the Temple that follows it, where Jesus announces that the new Temple of his body will be built in *three days* (John 2:19–21). This declaration anticipates the theme of the new worship in spirit and in truth that will be developed in chapter 4. The connection between the "three days" of the new Temple and Christ's resurrection is unmistakable, but it is probable that the evangelist also wished to relate it to the third day of Cana. The correlation between the revelation of Jesus' glory at Cana and at his death and resurrection renders it likely that Cana's "third day" indeed alludes to the third day of Jesus' resurrection.

In order to better grasp the significance of the wedding at Cana taking place on the "third day" it will be useful to return to the first chapter of the gospel and reconsider some elements of the narrative leading up to Cana.

4.3.2.3 Cana as the Seventh Day of a New Creation

As it has often been noted, Cana's "third day" concludes a sequence of days introduced in the first chapter of the Gospel that describes the beginning of

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ogy" to denote the fulfillment *now* – at least partial – of some element of God's kingdom that had been expected to come only at the end of time. This present, partial fulfillment does not necessarily exclude a further, completed eschatological fulfillment in the future.

61 Schnackenburg, *The Gospel According to St. John*, 331. One thinks of the equivalent presence of Jesus with his disciples in the synoptics as presence of the bridegroom when it is inappropriate to fast.

62 Cf. Rev 22:17 for another Johannine example of eschatological wedding related to thirst and to drinking the "water of life."

Jesus' public activity.[63] Three times, a new day is introduced with the same expression "the next day" (τῇ ἐπαύριον). After four days listed successively, the wedding at Cana is said to occur on "the third day," resulting in the following sequence:

> First day (John 1:19) + 1 (1:29) + 1 (1:35) + 1 (1:43) + "the third day" (2:1) = Seven days[64]

According to this format, the Wedding at Cana takes place at the climax of the first week of Jesus' activity. Several commentators have suggested that the succession of seven days in John 1–2 might also be a Johannine allusion to the seven days of creation narrated in the first chapter of Genesis, on the basis of a number of a number of parallels between the two narratives:[65]

- Both Genesis and John's Gospel begin with the words "Ἐν ἀρχῇ."
- The creation of light on the first day of creation (Gen 1:3) is echoed in Jesus' identity as "the true Light which gives light to every man coming into the world" (John 1:9).
- On the second day God created the firmament and He divided the waters that were under and below it (Gen 1:6–8). On John's second day, John the Baptist is baptizing with water, and he sees "the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove" (1:32), which recalls the Spirit of God that hovered over the face of the waters at creation (Gen 1:2).
- God's work of creation in Genesis was completed on the seventh day, which God blessed and hallowed (Gen 2:1–3). The wedding at Cana occurring on the seventh day is thus represented as the pinnacle of the new creation: after having described the "work" of Jesus' new creation in chapter one, the abundance of wine at the wedding signifies the covenantal feasting of the Lord with His people, recalling the Sabbath of the seventh day of creation.

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63 Cf. Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, 1:105–06.

64 Scholars have understood John's sequence of days as amounting to six, seven or eight days, depending on how one interprets "the third day" and whether one reads προϊ in John 1:41. Cf. Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, 1:75. Cf. Serra, *Contributi*, 29–44 for a review of the various positions on the first days of Jesus' ministry.

65 Cf. Boismard, *St. John's Prologue*, 106–107; *ibid.*, *Du Baptème à Cana*, 15; Barrosse, "The Seven Days of the New Creation in St. John's Gospel," 507–516; Carmichael, *The Story of Creation – Its Origin and its Interpretation in Philo and the Fourth Gospel*; Morris, *The Gospel According to John* (rev. ed.), 114–15; Thurian, *Mary, Mother of All Christians*, 120–21; Kerr, *The Temple of Jesus' Body*, 70–71; Coloe, *God Dwells with Us*, 21–23.

- Within this setting of a "new creation," the evangelist likely intends to portray Jesus as a "new Adam" figure. While this idea is only implicit at this point, it will become clearer when we look at the unfolding events of Jesus "hour" – the crucifixion.

In addition, the fact that Jesus addresses his mother as "woman" at Cana (John 2:4, cf. 19:26) was seen by ancient interpreters as a veiled reference to Eve, who is called "woman" and "mother" in Gen 2:23; 3:15, 20.[66] This Mary-Eve association is more than mere theological speculation, especially when considered in light of Rev 12. In a dramatic scene of cosmic warfare, we find the mother of the Messiah battling "that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan" (Rev 12:1f). As Brown says:

> There can be no doubt that Revelation is giving the Christian enactment of the drama foreshadowed in Gen iii 15 where enmity is placed between the serpent and *the woman*, between the serpent's seed and her seed, and the seed of the woman enters into conflict with the serpent.[67]

In addition to her commonly acknowledged symbolic role as representative of the people of God (Israel and/or the Church), the fact that the mother of the Messiah in Revelation is also called "woman" has led commentators to identify her with Mary, the mother of Jesus. Her battle against the ancient serpent of Eden identifies her with the woman of Gen 3:15 and creates a close association with Eve. A similar Johannine identification of Mary as the "new Eve" in the Fourth Gospel is therefore quite plausible, since we know that this tradition already existed in the Apocalypse at the end of the first century. This would mean that John not only portrays the wedding at Cana as the pinnacle of the new creation; he also hints that Mary is the new Eve.[68] In this way the evangelist has adroitly connected the nuptial theme of Cana with creation and the origins of humanity. After Cana, Mary disappears from the narrative until the crucifixion scene, "Jesus' hour" which in a sense also becomes her own hour. As we shall see, the evangelist portrays the crucifixion as a messianic wedding which brings forth the fruit of a new birth, where Mary as new Eve takes on the role of a spiritual mother.

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66 Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho* 100; Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 3.22.3; 5.19.1; *ibid. Proof of the Apostolic Teaching* 33; Tertullian, *On the Flesh of Christ* 17; cf. Hahn, *Hail Holy Queen*, 31–45; Brown, *The Gospel According to John* 107–109.

67 Brown, *The Gospel According to John i–xii*, 107–08.

68 For a thorough exposition of this view, cf. Feuillet, "Les épousailles du Messie," 548–50.

4.3.2.4 The Sandals of the Bridegroom-Messiah

Central to the Johannine depiction of the new creation is the proclamation of John the Baptist announcing the imminent coming of the Messiah – the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world and the Son of God (John 1:29–37). John describes Jesus as one "whose sandal strap I am not worthy to loose" (John 1:27), a saying that is also found in the synoptics and in Acts (Mark 1:7–8; Matt 3:11; Luke 3:16; Acts 13:25). It is worth reflecting on this declaration, keeping in mind the nuptial context of chapter 2 and the fact that the same John openly calls Jesus "the bridegroom" at his next appearance in John 3:29.

Exegetes commonly interpret John's saying on the sandal as an expression of his humility before one who is greater than he. Yet another interpretation, well known in the ancient world, tends to be overlooked by most modern commentators.[69] As Alonso-Schökel and Infante have pointed out, the Baptist's reference to the sandals may well be a reference to the law of the levirate and to the rite of the *halizah* formulated in Deut 25:5–10 and applied in Ruth 4:6–8. The law stipulates that the brother of a man who dies childless must marry his brother's widow and raise offspring who will carry the name of the deceased brother (Deut 25:5–6). If the levir does not marry the widow, the ceremony of *halizah* takes place, whereby the woman is released from the levirate obligation and becomes free to marry someone else:[70]

> If the man does not want to take his brother's wife . . . then his brother's wife shall come to him in the presence of the elders, remove his sandal from his foot, spit in his face, and answer and say, 'So shall it be done to the man who will not build up his brother's house.' (Deut 25:7, 9)

When the Jewish authorities ask John whether he is the Messiah, he vigorously rejects these claims. In light of John 3:28–29, to arrogate such a title would mean to supplant the one who has the rights of the bridegroom. Thus loosening Jesus' sandal would be tantamount to submitting him to the rite of the *halizah* (including spitting in his face!), causing Jesus to forsake marriage with his legitimate bride.

A few other clues may add weight to this nuptial interpretation of John's discourse with the priests and Levites. Infante suggests that John's self-identification with the "voice crying in the wilderness" of Isa 40:3 (John 1:23)

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69 Cf. Alonso Schökel, *I nomi dell'amore – Simboli matrimoniali nella Bibbia*, 111–133; Infante, *Lo sposo e la sposa*, 119–22.

70 Cf. "Levirate Marriage and Halizah" in *Encyclopedia Judaica* 11, 122–130.

may allude to the desert – the place of betrothal between God and Israel for some of the prophets:

> John calls the people into the desert to prepare them for the coming of the Messiah, in the same way that the ancient prophets led the bride into the desert to prompt her to a return, to a conversion (Hos 2:16–17; Jer 2:2–3). The desert is therefore the ideal place-experience in which the definitive covenant of love between God and His people will be renewed.[71]

Alonso-Schökel also points out that John's announcement of the coming of Jesus with the words ἔρχεται ἀνὴρ (John 1:30) is unusual. It is the only time in the Fourth Gospel where Jesus is called ἀνήρ, which emphasizes the masculine gender, rather than the more usual ἄνθρωπος. Of the eight times the word is used in John, five times it means "husband" (in the dialogue with the Samaritan woman, 4:16–18). Alonso-Schökel proposes that this unusual reference to Jesus as ἀνήρ might refer to God's designation as אִישׁ / ἀνήρ in Hos 2:2, 7, 16; 3:3; Jer 3:1. If this hypothesis of the levirate sandals is accepted, it would mean that John the evangelist is already preparing the nuptial theme in the first chapter of his gospel, with the Baptist announcing in veiled terms what he will make explicit in chapter 3.

4.3.2.5 Cana as Echo of Mount Sinai's Nuptial Covenant

The nuptial symbolism of the Wedding at Cana becomes much more vivid when one considers another aspect that tends to be overlooked by most commentators: this is the connection of the Cana narrative with the Sinai theophany narrative (Exod 19 to 24). In addition to alluding to the days of creation of the first chapter of Genesis, there are good reasons to believe that the sequence of seven days in John 1–2 also refers to God's revelation to Israel at Sinai (understood by the rabbis, as we shall see, to be the moment of the covenantal marriage between God and Israel and place where God meets His people as a groom comes to meet His bride).[72] In the following sections, I will highlight the literary and theological relationship between the Cana and Sinai narratives, beginning with a comparison of the sequence of seven days found

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71 Infante, *Lo sposo e la sposa*, 120 (my translation).

72 The allusion to Sinai in "the third day" of John 2:1 has been noted in passing by Moloney, *The Gospel of John*, 66. The correlation between both narratives has been studied in depth by Serra in his *Contributi dell'antica letteratura giudaica per l'esegesi di Giovanni 2, 1–12 e 19, 25–27*. My observations in this section are largely indebted to Serra's work.

in John 1–2 and in Exod 19 (and its Targum). Second, I will examine the role of Jesus' *logion* in John 1:51 alluding to Jacob's ladder, and its relation to Sinai and to Cana. Third, I will consider Mary's role at Cana as intermediate voice between Jesus and the servants, and how this role parallels the role of Moses standing between God and Israel at Sinai. Fourth, I will briefly study the wine at Cana as a symbol of the Torah and the eschatological feast.

4.3.2.6 The Days of John 1–2 and the Sinai Theophany

We have mentioned above the sequence of days in John 1–2 (First day + 1 + 1 + 1 + third day = seven days). In the book of Exodus, we read that the Israelites arrived at the wilderness of Sinai in the third month after they had come out of Egypt, on an unspecified day ("on that day" – בַּיּוֹם הַזֶּה) (Exod 19:1). Although the biblical text gives us few chronological details, it does tell us that the Lord said to Moses to consecrate the people "today and tomorrow" and warned them to be ready for *the third day*, "for *on the third day* the LORD will come down upon Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people" (Exod 19:10). The Sinai theophany and revelation of the glory of God is thus announced for the *third day*, as is the wedding at Cana when Jesus revealed his glory.

It is true that the mention of the third day in Exod 19 and John 2 can hardly be considered strong evidence for an intertextual relationship between the two passages. It might be a mere coincidence. The additional testimony of rabbinic literature, however, confirms and dramatically strengthens the correlation between the sequence of days at Sinai and at Cana. According to rabbinic tradition there was a *week* of preparation that preceded the Sinai theophany: God appeared to Israel on the *seventh day* from their arrival at the mountain. One particularly convincing example of this correlation is found in the Targum Pseudo-Jonathan, which narrates the Sinai theophany as occurring over a week, using the same structure of days found in John 1:19–2:11: four days are listed in succession, followed by "the third day" (1 + 1 + 1 + 1 + 3 = 7). Moreover, a comparison of the Targum and the Gospel reveals a number of parallels and contrasts between the daily events that preceded Sinai and Cana. Though one cannot establish a perfect correspondence between both narratives, their similarity still points to a probable correlation between the two literary units:[73]

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73 See Appendix D for the parallel texts of Targum Pseudo-Jonathan Exod 19:1–20 and John 1:19–2:11. Serra (*Contribuiti*, 64–73) has analyzed in greater detail the correlation between the Targum of Exodus and the Johannine narrative. Cf. also Serra, *Marie à Cana* (17–34) for the correlation between Jesus' first week of ministry, Sinai, the Transfiguration, and the Resurrection.

The Seven Days of the Sinai Theophany according to the Targum Pseudo-Jonathan compared with the Seven Days of John 1–2

Day	Targum Pseudo-Jonathan	John 1–2
1	In the third month of the Exodus . . . **on that day, the first of the month**, they came to the desert . . . (Exod 19:1–2) • Israelites come to wilderness of Sinai	Now this is the testimony of John . . . (John 1:19–28) • John: a voice crying in the wilderness
2	And Moses on the **second day** went up to the summit of the mount . . . (Exod 19:3–8) • Moses goes up to top of mount; the Lord speaks with him • God announces the giving of the Law. • Moses mediates between God and the people	**The next day** John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold! The Lamb of God (John 1:29–34) • John sees Jesus, confesses him to be Lamb of God • The Spirit descends on Jesus • John testifies that Jesus is Son of God
3	And the Lord said to Moses on the **third day**: I will reveal Myself to thee in the depth of the cloud of glory. (Exod 19:9) • God announces that He will reveal His glory. • The people will hear God and believe in Moses.	Again, **the next day**, John stood with two of his disciples. (John 1:35–42) • John confesses Jesus as Lamb of God; disciples confess him as Messiah. • The disciples hear John speak and follow Jesus
4	And the Lord said to Moses on the **fourth day**, Go unto the people, and prepare them today and tomorrow . . . (Exod 19:10–15) • Calling the people to prepare themselves and wash for two days • Warning to not draw near the mount or touch it. • Preparation for third day: abstaining from marital relations.	**The next day** Jesus wanted to go to Galilee, and He found Philip . . . (John 1:43–51) • Jesus calls Phillip and Nathanael • Philip: "We have found Him of whom Moses in the law, and also the prophets, wrote – Jesus of Nazareth" • Revelation of Jesus as Son of God and King of Israel • Allusion to Jacob's ladder, representing Sinai.
7	And it was **on the third day . . .** that on the mountain there were voices of thunders, and lightnings, and mighty clouds of smoke. (Exod 19:16–20) • The "third day" • Thunder, lightning, smoke, flames, trumpets • Moses is mediator • The Lord reveals Himself on mount Sinai	**On the third day** there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee. (John 2:2–11) • The "third day" • Festivity • Wine of the Messianic Torah • Mary is mediatrix • Jesus manifests his glory

First Day: Setting the Stage and Anticipation

On the first day, both the Targum and the Gospel describe the physical setting of both scenes: the desert or wilderness. It is a time of preparation and anticipation of the imminent revelation.

Second Day: Divine Gift and Consecration

On the second day, both texts describe a person standing as mediator between the divinity and the people: Moses mediates between God and Israel, and John the Baptist between Christ and the disciples. God announces to Moses that Israel will receive the Torah and be consecrated as "kingdom of priests and holy people;" John sees Jesus receiving the Holy Spirit as sign that He is the Son of God. The common feature is the divine gift – Torah and Holy Spirit, where both share the roles of communicating divine revelation, enabling communion with God, functioning as signs of the covenant, and serving as guarantors of divine adoption. The difference is whereas in the Targum God gives the Torah through the mediator (Moses) to the people (Israel), in the gospel God sends the Holy Spirit to Christ himself while the mediator (John the Baptist) and the people (the disciples) at this point only play the role of spectators and witnesses.

Third Day: Announcing the Imminent Revelation to Awaken Faith

On the third day, God announces that He will reveal Himself to Moses in the cloud of glory, so that the people may *hear* God's voice and *believe* in Moses. In the Gospel's third day, the disciples *hear* John speak and they are thereby convinced to *follow* Jesus, which is the practical application of believing in him.

Fourth Day: Warning to Stay at a Distance and Personal Invitation

On the fourth day, a marked (intentional?) contrast between the two stories becomes apparent: whereas the revelation at Sinai is awesome and frightening, and the people are warned not to approach the mountain and to purify themselves for three days in preparation for the divine theophany, Jesus, by contrast, extends a personal invitation to His disciples to follow Him, even despite the skepticism of Nathanael. Moreover, whereas the Sinai narrative contains a severe prohibition against engaging in marital relations, the Johannine "week" concludes with the joy of a wedding.

Seventh Day: The Revelation of God's/Christ's Glory

Both stories end with the revelation of divine glory on the seventh day – of YHWH at Sinai and Jesus at Cana. But if at Sinai the predominant impression is that of distance between a Holy God and an unworthy people

(cf. Exod 19:21–24), at Cana the closeness of intimate communion and joy flowing from the abundance of wine characterizes the celebration of the wedding.

The similarities between the Cana narrative and the Targum's account of the Sinai revelation are too close to be mere coincidence. Though the Targum's date of redaction is later than the first century, it is probable that the traditions on the week that preceded the Sinai revelation already existed at the time of the Gospel's redaction, and John relied on them to craft his Cana narrative on the pattern of Sinai as the moment of nuptials between Christ and his people.[74]

4.3.2.7 Jacob's Ladder and the Sign of Cana (John 1:51)

> And [Jesus] said to [Nathanael], "Amen, amen, I say to you, hereafter you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man." (John 1:51)

Jesus' *logion* in John 1:51 is another probable connecting link between the wedding at Cana and the Sinai covenant.[75] At the same time, it also points to the Jerusalem Temple when read in light of rabbinic tradition. Jesus is making an obvious reference to the dream of the patriarch Jacob on his journey from Beer Sheva to Haran. In this vision, "a ladder was set up on the earth, and its top reached to heaven; and there the angels of God were ascending and descending on it" (עֹלִים וְיֹרְדִים בּוֹ, Gen 28:12). In its most ancient interpretation, "it" (בּוֹ) has been taken to mean the ladder (LXX, Philo, Josephus, Jubilees, and some early rabbis), but the majority of rabbis in later rabbinic literature interpret בּוֹ as referring to Jacob – meaning that the angels were thought to ascend and descend not on the ladder but on Jacob himself.[76] By referring to Jacob's ladder, Jesus is thus identifying himself (the Son of Man) with either Jacob's ladder or, depending on the antiquity of the Jacob tradition, perhaps with the patriarch himself, upon which the angels ascend and descend.

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74 I hold it to be highly improbable that the subtle Gospel allusions to Sinai would have had any significant influence on the targumist. On the relationship between the NT and rabbinic texts, cf. section 1.6.2 above, p. 52.

75 For discussions of John 1:51, cf. Kerr, *The Temple of Jesus' Body*, 136–166; Serra, *Contributi*, 260–301; *Marie à Cana*, 34–39.

76 The two views are presented in *GenR* 68:12 (Freeman/Simon, 2:626). In commenting on the view that the angels were ascending and descending on Jacob himself, the Midrash states that while Jacob's body lies on the earth, his true features are in heaven. Applying this to Jesus would mean that he is representing himself as the connection between the heavenly reality and the earth. Cf. Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, 1:90.

But why would Jesus make such a declaration in his conversation with Nathanael within the context of calling his first disciples, between John's prologue and the wedding at Cana? The answer may be found in the fact that Jacob's ladder was considered to be a prophetic figure of the Sinai revelation. If this tradition already existed in the first century, and if the evangelist is referring to it, Jesus' *logion* would thus be an introduction to the Cana narrative where the wedding – the occasion where Christ's glory is revealed – is presented as a fulfillment of the Sinai covenant where God's glory was revealed. In this light, it is interesting to note how *Genesis Rabbah* 68:12 interprets Genesis 28:12–13 by linking every element of Jacob's vision of the ladder with a verse from the Sinai event:

> *Then he dreamed, and behold, a ladder*: this represents Sinai. . . . *that was set up on the earth*: "and they stood at the foot of the mountain" (Exod 19:17). . . . *and its top reached to heaven*: "and the mountain burned with fire to the midst of heaven" (Deut 4:11). *And behold the angels of God*: "The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of thousands; [the Lord is among them as in Sinai, in the Holy Place] (Psa 68:17). . . . *and behold the angels of God*: These are Moses and Aaron. . . . *were ascending*: "and Moses went up to God" (Exod 19:3). . . . *and descending*: "So Moses went down from the mountain" (Exod 19:14). *And behold, the LORD stood above it*: "Then the LORD came down upon Mount Sinai, on the top of the mountain" (Exod 19:20).[77]

Thus, according to the Midrash, the ladder is Mount Sinai, the earth upon which it stood and its top reaching into heaven are respectively the foot and top of the mountain. The angels of God ascending the ladder are either the angels present at Sinai, or alternatively, Moses and Aaron climbing the mountain. Just as God stood above the ladder, so He stood upon Mount Sinai. Jesus' *logion* on Jacob's ladder therefore appears to function as a transition between John's prologue and the Cana pericope: the prologue announced in a general way that "we beheld [Christ's] glory" and this glory was the glory of the *Shekhinah* revealed at Sinai that dwelt in the ancient Tabernacle. Now, by identifying himself with Jacob's ladder upon which the angels ascended and descended, Jesus is also associating himself with Mount Sinai, the place where the glory of the *Shekhinah* was manifested to Israel and dwelt among them.[78] His saying thus

77 *GenR* 68:12 (Freeman/Simon, 2:625).

78 The Targums on Genesis (Onkelos and Jerusalem) also support this view, explicitly placing God's *Shekhinah* on Jacob's ladder.

serves as a preparation and anticipation for the revelation of his glory to the disciples in the very next chapter at Cana. In addition, the same Midrash also understands Jacob's dream to symbolically refer to the Temple:[79]

> Bar Kappara taught: No dream is without its interpretation. *And behold a ladder* symbolizes the stairway; *set up on the earth* – the altar, as it says, *an altar of earth thou shalt make unto me* (Exod 20:24); *and the top of it reached to heaven* – the sacrifices, the odour of which ascended to heaven; *and behold the angels of God* – the High Priests; *ascending and descending on it* – ascending and descending the stairway. *And behold, the Lord stood beside him* (28:13) – *I saw the Lord standing beside the altar* (Amos 9:1). (*GenR* 68:12)

The Biblical text already indicates that the place of Jacob's vision is the "house of God" and the "gate of heaven" (Gen 28:17). The Midrash elaborates: The ladder symbolizes the ramp that led to the altar of the Temple. The earth on which it stood refers to the altar. The heaven towards which its top reached represents the sacrifices, whose odor rises towards the heavens. The angels are the high priests who go up and down the ramp of the altar, and the Lord standing above the ladder (or above Jacob) is associated with His presence before the altar, as described by Amos. Moreover, the Midrash and Targum add that the site of Jacob's vision of the ladder was the place where the Temple was later to stand.[80] The identification of Jacob's vision at Bethel with the Temple is further confirmed by the repeated use of the word מָקוֹם/τόπος (6 times in Gen 28:10–19) which commonly refers to the Temple in the OT and in later Jewish tradition.[81] The association of the ladder with the Temple is also relevant to our Johannine context, for it connects John 1:51 not only with the revelation of the glory of God's *Shekhinah* introduced in 1:14 and with Cana as the New Sinai, but also with Jesus' self-identification as the New Temple in the passage that immediately follows the Cana pericope (John 2:13–22).

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79 Kerr, in *The Temple of Jesus' Body* (136–66), examines at length the relationship between John 1:51 and the Temple, but he does not address its relation with Sinai.

80 Even though the vision appeared at Bethel and not in Jerusalem; Tg. Ps.-Jon. Gen 28:17: "This place is not profane but the holy house of the name of the Lord, the proper spot for prayer, set forth before the gate of heaven, founded beneath the throne of Glory." Cf. also *GenR* 69:7.

81 Cf. Exod 15:17; Deut 12:5, 11–14; 2 Sam 7:10; 2 Chr 17:9 and 4Q174.1–3; Jer 7:3–4, 7, 12, 14; 2 Macc 1:27–29; 2:17–18; also John 4:20; 11:48. Cf. Kerr, *The Temple of Jesus' Body*, 152–56; 303–306.

4.3.2.8 "Do whatever He Tells You." Mary at Cana and the Sinai Covenant

We now move to a consideration of a few features of the Cana narrative itself. Another argument supporting the correlation between Cana and Sinai is Mary's saying to the servants at the wedding: "do whatever He tells you" ("ὅ τι ἂν λέγῃ ὑμῖν ποιήσατε") (John 2:5). This exhortation echoes the words pronounced by the people of Israel on three occasions at Mount Sinai according to the Exodus account.[82] The first proclamation occurs after God's preliminary meeting with Moses and before the theophany to Israel, when the people tell Moses:

> "All that the LORD has spoken we will do" (Exod 19:8)
>
> ("πάντα ὅσα εἶπεν ὁ θεός ποιήσομεν καὶ ἀκουσόμεθα")

The second instance occurs after the theophany, at the time of the sealing of the covenant, when the people proclaim:

> "All the words which the LORD has said we will do" (Exod 24:3)
>
> ("πάντας τοὺς λόγους οὓς ἐλάλησεν κύριος ποιήσομεν καὶ ἀκουσόμεθα")

The third instance comes immediately afterwards, after Moses reads the book of the covenant to them and they respond in unison:

> "All that the LORD has said we will do, and be obedient" (Exod 24:7)
>
> ("πάντα ὅσα ἐλάλησεν κύριος ποιήσομεν καὶ ἀκουσόμεθα")

Apart from the affinity in language with Mary's words, these proclamations follow a common pattern, as Serra has noted: first comes the discourse of a mediator (Moses), standing between God and the people, and recalling the salvific acts of God and the conditions of the covenant. Second, the people unanimously respond by giving their assent to the covenant and its stipulations. Third, the ceremony displays liturgical features. It is a cultic assembly with a fixed form that can be repeated at regular intervals by a feast in which the people commemorate and renew their alliance with God.[83]

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82 Cf. Serra, *Contribuiti*, 139–226; *ibid.*, *Marie à Cana*, 39–47.

83 Other instances of such liturgical covenant-renewal ceremonies are found in Josh 1:1–18; 24:1–28; 2 Kgs 23:1–3; 2 Chr 15:9–15. Cf. Serra, *Contribuiti*, 155–167.

Can this pattern be found in the Cana narrative? In the first two chapters of the Gospel, the role of mediator is shared by John the Baptist, who testifies to the salvific role of Jesus, and Mary, who urges the servants to do as Jesus says. The correlation with the Exodus texts is not perfect: at Sinai, the people proclaim their obedience to God through the mediator Moses, while in the Gospel Mary the "mediatrix" prompts the servants to obey Jesus, and their obedience is seen not in their reply but in their actions. Yet the similarity between Israel's and Mary's words still seems too close to be a mere coincidence, especially given the other comment elements between Sinai and Cana. The presence of the jars used for ritual purposes also adds a liturgical connotation to the Cana narrative.

The nuptial symbolism associated with Sinai sheds new light on Mary's role as mediatrix between Jesus and the servants at the Wedding at Cana, similar to Moses' role as mediator between God and Israel at Sinai (cf. Deut 5:5, 27). The obedience of the servants to Mary's words, modeled on the obedience of Israel at Sinai, thus becomes a model of the docile obedience required of the disciples of Christ so that they may enter into the new nuptial alliance and joy of the wedding by which it is sealed.

4.3.2.9 Cana's Wine: Messianic Torah and Eschatological Feast

Jesus' miraculous transformation of ordinary water into a great abundance of superior wine stands of course at the heart of the sign of Cana. The joy and enebriation of wine is often associated with the pleasures of erotic love in biblical literature. At the same time, wine and its use in cultic worship was known in ancient Judaism as a sign of the divine covenant and of the Torah – an association which strengthens the connection between Sinai and Cana.[84] Ancient texts also attest to the presence of an abundance of wine flowing in the Garden of Eden, and wine was expected to be a sign of the eschatological feast of the end of days.[85] We have already examined the role of covenantal feasting in our discussion on Lady Wisdom's banquet above.[86] Here we examine more closely the symbolism of wine as related to salvation history.

Wine in Eden

Wine in the OT is a symbol of the goodness of creation, often echoing the psalmist's view that God generously provided the world with "wine to gladden

84 For studies on the wine of Cana and its OT background, cf. Serra, *Contribuiti*, 227–257; *ibid. Marie à Cana*, 47–66; Little, *Echoes of the Old Testament*, 7–73.

85 Cf. Thurian, *Mary, Mother of All Christians,* 125–30.

86 Cf. above, p. 73f.

the heart of man" (Psa 104:15).[87] Although there is no biblical evidence of wine in Eden, the tradition is known elsewhere: According to 2 En. 8:5, "two springs come out [of paradise] which send forth honey and milk, and their springs send forth oil and wine." By contrast, 3 Bar. 4:16 speaks of "wine" begotten of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil that caused Adam to lose the glory of God. The tradition of wine in the garden of delights is also preserved in some currents of rabbinic literature. For example, in *TgCant* 7:3, the beloved's "mixed wine" represents the words of Torah that are compared to the water of the great river of Eden; and the Targum renders the wine of Cant 8:2 as "old wine preserved in its grape since the day the world was created and from the pomegranates and fruits prepared for the righteous in the Garden of Eden."

Wine and Torah

Wine is one of the signs of the covenant. It is a gift of God and a sign of His blessing to Israel as a reward for faithful Torah observance (Deut 7:11–13; 11:14; Prov 3:10); failure to keep the covenant results in the absence of wine (Deut 28:39).[88] In Jer 23:9, wine is related to the reception of the Word of God, which has an intoxicating effect on the prophet: he is "like a drunken man . . . whom wine has overcome, because of the Lord and because of His holy words." In Philo[89] and in rabbinic literature, wine becomes one of the preferred symbols of the Torah, and Mount Sinai is sometimes represented as the "wine cellar" of the Torah.[90] For example, the Targum on Canticles interprets the "house of wine" of Cant 2:4 as "the house of study at Sinai" where the assembly of Israel studies Torah and declares its acceptance of God's commandments:

> The Assembly of Israel said: "YY brought me into the House of Study at Sinai to learn the Law from the mouth of Moses, the great Scribe. And I received the banner of His commandments over me with love, and I said: 'All that YY Has commanded I will do and I will obey' (Exod 24:7)."

We note that the targumist interprets Cant 2:4 by citing Exodus 24:7. As seen above, this declaration of obedience by the people – here associated with the romantic verses of the Song – is echoed in Mary's words to the servants at Cana "Whatever He says to you, do it."

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87 Cf. Job 1:13; Eccl 9:7; 10:19.

88 On wine as a sign of covenant faithfulness, see above, p. 5 n. 13.

89 Cf. *De fuga et inv.* 176; *De somniis* 2:190; *De vita Mosis* 1:187.

90 Cf. *Sifre Deut* 48 (below, p. 306); *PRK* 12:5 (p. 323); *CantR* 1:2 (p. 330 n. 96); *TgCant* 2:3–4 (p. 345).

Wine as Symbol of Cultic Worship

The contrast between the water for the Jewish rites of purification and the wine at Cana has often been interpreted as the sign of the old order transformed into the new, or of the order of law transformed into that of grace.[91] Jesus' bridegroom role as provider of the "new wine" of grace is also highlighted in his identity at "true vine" in John 15:1–10. As we have seen, the bridegroom-wine association is also found in the synoptics, where the question on fasting is juxtaposed with Jesus' saying on the "new wine," denoting the inappropriateness of fasting at a time when the bridegroom and provider of the best wine is present among his people. Of course, the cultic role of wine offered as drink offerings with the sacrifices in the Temple should also be recalled (cf. Exod 29:40–41; Lev 23:13, 18; Num 15:5–10). Given Jesus' roles in the Fourth Gospel as new Temple and sacrificial Lamb offered at the "hour" of his crucifixion (anticipated at Cana), and given the association between Jesus' blood and the Eucharistic wine (6:53–56), it is likely that the wine of Cana carries some additional cultic or sacrificial allusions.

Wine and Wisdom

Related to the use of wine as symbol of Torah is the association between wine and wisdom. In Prov 9:2, 5, personified Lady Wisdom has "mixed her wine," and she invites those who seek her to come and drink it: Seeking and finding divine Wisdom is thus tantamount to finding an attractive wife and drinking abundant wine with her at a sumptuous feast table. Boismard shows how John makes use of the traits of Lady Wisdom known in wisdom literature and associates them with the Logos: Both were pre-existent, existing in the beginning with God (Prov 8:22–25; John 1:1–2) and active in the work of creation (Prov 8:26–30; John 1:3); both came into the world to dwell among men (Prov 8:31; Sir 24:7–12), and both provided wine and bread for them (Prov 9:1–5; John 2:1–11, 6:4–14).[92] Philo sheds further light on Jesus' role as Logos or incarnate Wisdom and his connection with wine. Commenting on King Melchizedek, the "priest of God most high" who brought out bread and wine for Abraham (Gen 14:18), Philo writes that Melchizedek, as "priest-logos," will also perform a miraculous transformation of water into wine:

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91 Cf. John 1:17; Schnackenburg, *The Gospel According to John*, 1:339.

92 Boismard, *St. John's Prologue*, 74–76; *Du baptême à Cana*, 137–43. As we have seen, all of these characteristics also apply to Lady Wisdom in Sir 24.

> Melchizedek shall bring forth *wine instead of water*, and give our souls a pure drink, that they may become possessed with a divine intoxication that is more sober than sobriety itself. For he is the priest-logos, and has for his portion the Self-existent.[93]

For Philo, wine represents the wisdom that intoxicates men and gives them delight and joy. Moreover, Philo calls the Logos "cupbearer" and "master of the feast":

> And who can pour over the happy soul which proffers its own reason as the most sacred cup, the holy goblets of true joy, except the cup-bearer (οἰνοχόος) of God, the master of the feast (συμποσίαρχος), the λόγος? Not differing from the drink itself, but being itself in an unmixed state, the pure delight and sweetness, and pouring forth, and joy, and ambrosial medicine of pleasure and happiness.[94]

John may well have been aware of this Philonic identification of wine with wisdom, and in a similar way he may have intended to associate the wine of Cana with wisdom, or contrast the wine of the new doctrine of the Logos with the old Torah represented by the jars of water.

Wine and Love

Lady Wisdom's invitation to come "drink her wine" in Prov 9:5 also shows the association between wine and nuptial love. Wine of course flows in abundance in the Song of Songs as sign of the inebriation of the lovers for one another. The king's love for his woman is "better than wine" (Cant 1:2, 4) and so is hers for him (Cant 4:10). At the climax of the Song, when the lover "comes to his garden," he exclaims: "I drink my wine with my milk" (Cant 5:1). His beloved's navel is "a rounded bowl that never lacks mixed wine" (Cant 7:2) and her kisses are also "the best wine" (Cant 7:9), while she desires to bring her man into the house of her mother so that she may give him "spiced wine to drink, the juice of my pomegranates" (Cant 8:2).

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93 *Legum allegoriae* 3:82; Cf. Dodd, *Interpretation* 298. The association between Jesus and Melchizedek is known from the Letter to the Hebrews (5:6, 10; 7:1–17) but not from John.

94 *De somniis* 2:249; Cf. also *ibid.* 2:183; *Quod Deus immut.* 158; *Legum allegoriae* 1:84; cf. Dodd, *Interpretation*, 298–99; Schnackenburg, *The Gospel According to John*, 1:339.

Wine as Eschatological Sign of the Messiah

Wine is also symbolically connected to the messianic age and end of days in prophetic and apocalyptic literature. It is the sign of the happiness and deliverance that will characterize the age of salvation.[95] Jesus' miraculous providence of "the good wine" for the wedding feast, sign of abundance and joy, is one of the consistent OT figures for the coming of the kingdom of God, often represented by a great feast where there flows an abundance of wine.[96] In addition to the Greek legends surrounding Dionysus that understood a miraculous gift of wine as revealing the presence of deity[97] Jewish tradition also associated an abundant outpouring of wine with the coming of the Messiah.[98] This is seen in Jacob's blessing to Judah, which claims that the future ruler from Judah will be

> binding his donkey to the vine, and his donkey's colt to the choice vine, he washes his garments in wine, and his clothes in the blood of grapes. His eyes are darker than wine, and his teeth whiter than milk. (Gen 49:11–12)

Amos' eschatological vision sees mountains dripping with sweet wine, and he announces that the captives of Israel will return and "plant vineyards and drink wine from them":

> "Behold, the days are coming," says the LORD, "when the plowman shall overtake the reaper and the treader of grapes him who sows the seed; the mountains shall drip sweet wine, and all the hills shall flow with it. I will restore the fortunes of my people Israel, and they shall rebuild the ruined cities and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and drink their wine, and they shall make gardens and eat their fruit." (Amos 9:11, 13–14)

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95 On the eschatological intention of the Cana story, cf. Huckle and Visokay, *The Gospel According to John*, Vol. 1, 24; Schnackenburg, *The Gospel According to John*, 1:338.

96 Cf. Beasley-Murray, *John*, 36; Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, 105 on Cana as sign of the messianic times.

97 Cf. Bultmann, *The Gospel of John*, 118–19; Schnackenburg, *The Gospel According to St. John,* 1:340; Koester, *Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel*, 84.

98 Brown writes: "Thus the headwaiter's statement at the end of the scene, 'You have kept the choice wine until now,' can be understood as the proclamation of the coming of the messianic days," *The Gospel According to John*, 105; Schnackenburg, *Gospel*, 338–40; McWhirter, *The Bridegroom Messiah*, 47–49. As we have seen, the messianic symbolism of wine is used in the synoptics within the context of the question on fasting; cf. section 4.2.1 above, p. 110.

Likewise, for Hosea, the scent of eschatological Israel will be "like the wine of Lebanon" (Hos 14:7), and Isaiah sees the end of days characterized by an abundance of wine on the mountain of the Lord (25:6; 55:1). Significantly, wine is sometimes linked with YHWH's promise to restore his nuptial alliance with his people (Hos 2:19–22; Isa 62:4–5, 8). 2 Baruch is also explicit on the abundance of wine in the messianic age:

> And it shall come to pass when all is accomplished . . . that the Messiah shall then begin to be revealed . . . The earth also shall yield its fruit ten thousandfold and on each vine there shall be a thousand branches, and each branch shall produce a thousand clusters, and each cluster produce a thousand grapes, and each grape produce a cor of wine. (2 Bar. 29:3–5)[99]

In rabbinic writings, wine represents the Torah taught by the Messiah at the end of days. For example, the Targum interprets the Shulamite's invitation to her lover to drink "spiced wine" in Cant 8:1–2 as Israel's request to the King Messiah that he come "suck the *judgments of the Law*, just as a suckling sucks at his mother's breast." The erotic verse of the Canticle and the joyful drinking of spiced wine by the lovers has been turned by the targumist into a joyful acceptance of the precepts of the Torah in the last days.

The wine of Cana has been traditionally interpreted to signify things such as the Eucharistic wine, the Holy Spirit, the New Covenant, the teachings of Christ, or the goods of the messianic age. When we consider the Sinai-Cana typology, we also see that just as God revealed His glory on the third day at Sinai by providing the old wine of Torah, Jesus the Messiah reveals his glory on the third day at Cana by taking on the role of the bridegroom, providing the better wine which is a symbol of his new, eschatological Torah and of the great eschatological wedding feast to come.

4.3.2.10 Summary: The Wedding at Cana

John has carefully crafted the narrative of the first two chapters of his Gospel with a series of allusions pointing to at least three key moments of salvation history: First, he depicts Cana as the culmination of a new creation, occurring on the seventh day of Jesus' first week of ministry, with Jesus figuring as new Adam and his mother playing the role of a new Eve. Secondly, he strongly alludes to the Sinai revelation and nuptial covenant between God and Israel,

99 On the abundance of wine in the eschatological age, cf. also Joel 3:18; Jer 31:5, 12; Zech 9:17; 1 Enoch 10:19; Sib. Or. 2:317f; 3:620-24, 744f. Cf. Schnackenburg, *The Gospel According to John*, 338 and n. 34.

using a number of clever literary hints: these include the sequence of seven days leading to Cana resembling the seven days that preceded Sinai, the revelation of Christ's glory at Cana echoing the revelation of YHWH's glory in the cloud at Horeb, Jacob's ladder as a symbol of Sinai, Mary's mediating role and her words to the servants recalling the obedient response of Israel to the Sinai covenant, and the association of Cana's wine with the Torah. All these similarities, when read together with John 3:29, show that John intends to reveal Jesus as the bridegroom who came to reveal a new and more intimate dimension of the nuptial union that God had made at Sinai with His beloved people. Thirdly, John also points to Jesus' role as Tabernacle and Temple, describing him as the Logos "dwelling" among us, just as the *Shekhinah* dwelt in the former Tabernacle, and reaffirming this idea with allusions to the midrashic interpretations of Jacob's ladder as Temple. The evangelist continues to develop this dimension of realized eschatology in the next pericope by explicitly depicting Jesus's body as the New Temple.

4.3.3 *The New Temple* (*John 2:13–22*)

4.3.3.1 The Bridegroom-Messiah as New Temple

Just as Matthew juxtaposes the nuptial coming of the bridegroom (Matt 25:1–13) and the destruction of the Temple at the time of the *parousia* (Matt 24:1–44), John also closely associates the same two themes of marriage and Temple, placing the episode of the cleansing of the Temple (John 2:13–22) immediately following the marriage of Cana (John 2:1–12). This arrangement is no mere coincidence. Both episodes refer to the fulfillment of timeless Jewish institutions – the water for ritual purification and the Temple – in the new cult centered on the person of Jesus. Both incidents also foreshadow the passion, death and resurrection of Jesus which are at the heart of Jesus' role as bridegroom-Temple.[100] Unlike the synoptics, however, John places the cleansing of the Temple at the beginning of his Gospel.[101] This means that all of his life, signs, and ministry will be portrayed in light of his identity as the new Temple, as the narrative moves towards its climax of Jesus' "hour."

John reports that Jesus went to Capernaum for a few days after leaving Cana, and then continued up to Jerusalem at the time of the Passover. Upon entering the Temple complex he violently drove out the sellers and their animals with a whip and overturned the tables of the money changers, accusing them of

100 Cf. Beasley-Murray, *John*, 31; Koester, *Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel*, 82f.

101 The synoptics place the incident near the end of Jesus' ministry: cf. Matt 21:12–13; Mark 11:15–17; Luke 19:45–46.

making his "Father's house" a house of trade (2:16). Asked for a sign to justify his action, he foretells the Temple's demise, announcing at the same time the raising of a new Temple: "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up" (John 2:19). When the Jews respond with outrage at the suggestion that what had taken forty-six years to build could be raised in three days, no reply comes from Jesus' mouth, but the evangelist adds a clarifying note for his readers:

> But He was speaking of the temple of His body. Therefore, when He had risen from the dead, His disciples remembered that He had said this to them; and they believed the Scripture and the word which Jesus had said" (John 2:21–22).[102]

As Schnackenburg notes, "this explanation [given in John 2:21] makes Jesus the 'place' where God is to be adored, the true 'house of God.'"[103] Numerous studies have been made on Jesus' role as new Temple in the Fourth Gospel.[104] Here I will limit myself to some observations that pertain to our nuptial interest. I have mentioned above Alonso-Schökel's proposal to link John the Baptist's saying on Jesus' sandals with the law of the levirate, which hints that Jesus is bridegroom of Israel and anticipates the announcement of the bridegroom-Messiah that John will openly make in John 3:29. In the formulation and application of the levirate law in Deut 25:9–10 and Ruth 4:11–12, the producing of offspring for the deceased brother is called "building up his house" – a common expression denoting the establishment of a marriage and family and the raising of children. As is well known, the Temple was commonly called "house of the Lord," and the Holy of Holies was thought of as a nuptial chamber where YHWH united Himself with Israel. Here Jesus calls the Temple his "Father's house." In other words, he is in the Temple as a Son is in his father's home.[105] When Jesus cleanses the Temple, foretelling its demise

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102 The synoptics do not report Jesus' provocative statement on the demise of the Temple in the context of his cleansing of the Temple (cf. Matt 21:12–17, Mark 9:15–19, Luke 19:45–46) but rather put it in the mouth of Jesus' enemies: the false witnesses at Jesus' trial (Mark 14:58, Matt 26:61), or the passers-by at the crucifixion (Mark 15:29, Matt 27:40).

103 Schnackenburg, *The Gospel According to John*, 1:352. Cf. also Mark 11:24–25 where the community of Jesus' disciples is the "place" of prayer and pardon.

104 Cf. Coloe, *God Dwells With Us: Temple Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel;* Kerr, *The Temple of Jesus' Body: The Temple Theme in the Gospel of John;* Um, *The Theme of Temple Christology in John's Gospel*; Hahn, *Temple, Sign and Sacrament: Towards a New Perspective on the Gospel of John*. See Hahn, p. 107 n. 1 for a more complete bibliography. For a short sample of general Temple studies, see above, p. 47.

105 Cf. Kerr, *The Temple of Jesus' Body*, 79, 268–313.

and the raising of the "Temple of his body," could the evangelist be referring to the "building up of God's house," that is, the renewal and transformation of the marriage covenant with Israel, in continuation with his nuptial allusion to the law of the levirate? Is Jesus' reference to the destruction of the Temple an allusion to the "death" of the older brother (the former cultic institutions and Temple service of Judaism) pointing to his "levirate marriage" with Israel as he takes on the role of the firstborn son taking over the wife (Israel/his disciples) of his deceased brother (Temple Judaism)? Such an interpretation would be in line with the contrasts in the Gospel between old and new, law and grace, water for the purification of the Jews and new wine of the Messiah. The theme of the Father's house will return in John 14:2 on the eve of Jesus' hour.

4.3.3.2 New Temple, New Sacrifice

When Jesus cleanses the Temple, his disciples remember Ps 69:9: "Zeal for your house has consumed me" (κατέφαγέν με) (John 2:17). Dodd notes that this psalm belongs to a group of psalms of the Righteous Sufferer which are often associated with the Passion of Christ. Just as the Righteous Sufferer in the psalm was persecuted for remaining loyal to the Temple, so Jesus' action in cleansing the Temple will arouse enmity against him and eventually lead him to his death and "consummation."[106] The new Temple is inextricably linked with the bridegroom's self-sacrifice, suffering and death. Jesus' action in the Temple took place during Passover (2:13) when lambs were slain to commemorate Israel's deliverance from Egypt, and in anticipation of his own paschal sacrifice as "Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world" (cf. 1:29). The sacrificial element of Jesus' death is further displayed in the citation of Ps 69 and its use of the verb καταφάγεταί, which is often used to describe the fire that consumes the sacrifices offered to God on the altar of the Temple.[107] By disrupting the trade taking place in the Temple courts necessary for the animal sacrifices, Jesus is foreshadowing the cessation of sacrificial worship in the Temple and its replacement by his own sacrifice, a prerequisite for the institution of the new Christological Temple worship. Although the Logos already "tabernacled" among men at the moment of the Incarnation, Jesus becomes a Temple properly speaking only after the resurrection, as indicated by his inten-

106 Dodd, *Interpretation*, 301. Dodd also notes how in the Synoptic tradition the cleansing of the Temple leads directly to the Passion.

107 E.g. Lev 6:10; 9:24; 1 Kgs 18:38; 2 Chr 7:1; Cf. Kerr, *The Temple of Jesus' Body*, 85.

tion to raise up the Temple in "three days."[108] In addition, as Hahn notes, the use of καταφάγεταί (which can mean eat up, consume or devour) may also be connected to Jesus' shocking exhortation to his followers in the bread of life discourse to eat (φαγεῖν) his flesh (John 6:51–53).[109] The Eucharistic allusion is plausible when one considers Jesus' role as sacrificial lamb of God and the fact that it was necessary for the Israelites to eat (φαγεῖν) the flesh of the paschal lamb (Exod 12:8). The connection is strengthened in that our three relevant passages, the cleansing of the Temple, the bread of life discourse, and the crucifixion are all described as occurring at the time of the Passover (John 2:12; 6:4; 19:14).

4.3.3.3 Eschatological Revelation of Divine Glory

The evangelist's declaration that Jesus is a Temple that will surpass the one that stood in Jerusalem is but the logical development of his identity as the *Shekhinah* who tabernacled among men and revealed the divine כָּבוֹד/δόξα, as introduced in the Gospel's prologue. The synoptics also promote the idea that Jesus is one who is "greater than the Temple" and a new, spiritual Temple "made without hands" (Matt 12:6; Mark 14:58). Matthew identifies Jesus with the *Shekhinah* and associates his death with the ripping of the veil in the Temple that allowed access to the innermost sanctuary.[110] The promise of a new Temple announces that God's glory will no longer be manifested in a building but rather in the person of Jesus, especially at the hour of his glorification (cf. John 17:1–5).[111] Jesus' prediction that he will raise up a new Temple also ties in with the eschatological promises of a renewed Temple worship (cf. Ezek 40–48; Tob 13:10; 14:5). Malachi had announced that the Lord's messenger would come suddenly into the Temple (Mal 3:1), and other prophetic passages declare that the Temple will be rebuilt by the messianic Davidic "Branch" (2 Sam 7:12–13; Zech 6:12).[112]

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108 And so Schnackenburg (*The Gospel According to John*, 1:352): "John sees this spiritual temple as coming about only through the death and resurrection of Jesus, and he sees it portrayed in the body of the risen Lord."

109 Hahn, "Temple, Sign, and Sacrament," 113.

110 Cf. section 4.2.5 above, p. 118.

111 John's new Temple is therefore primarily Christological, in contrast to Paul's new Temple which is primarily anthropological and ecclesiological.

112 The Targums on Zech 6:12 and Isa 53:5, and Sib. Or. 5:422 refer to the Messiah as builder of the Temple. Cf. Koester, *Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel*, 87 n. 17–19.

4.3.4 *New Birth, Baptism, and Mystical Marriage* (*John 3*)

4.3.4.1 Bridegroom, Bride, and Friend of the Bridegroom (John 3:29)

The third chapter of John contains the only occurrence in the Fourth Gospel where Jesus is explicitly called "the bridegroom." When John the Baptist's disciples express concern that Jesus is competing with John's own ministry by baptizing and attracting more followers than him, John responds:

> He who has the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom's voice. Therefore this joy of mine is fulfilled. (John 3:29)

This is also the only nuptial passage of the four gospels where Christ's bride is explicitly mentioned. With these words John the Baptist explains to his followers, in continuation with his discourse in chapter one, that his role was only preparatory and that they rightly ought to follow Jesus, the bridegroom-Messiah, and not him. The Fourth Gospel follows the synoptics and Paul in attributing the role of the bridegroom to the Messiah, an oddity in early Judaism, as we have seen.[113] John is but the best man or "friend of the bridegroom," the שושבין responsible for arranging the wedding and for bringing the bridegroom to the bride.[114] The bride does not belong to him but to the bridegroom. Since the dispute which gave rise to John's statement is over the issue of the disciples' allegiance to him or to Jesus, it is clear that the bride here represents the community of believers.[115] As *shoshbin* John is thus joyfully presenting the bride as a people purified by the waters of baptism to the bridegroom-Messiah.

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113 Cf. above, p. 112 n. 14.

114 On John the Baptist and *shoshbin*'s role in early Judaism, cf. Brown, *The Gospel According to John i–xii*, 152; Barrett, *The Gospel According to John, 186*; Jeremias, "νύμφη, νυμφίος," *TDNT* 4:1101; Strack-Billerbeck 1:45–46; 500–504. The rabbis attribute the role of *shoshbin* to Moses as mediator of the marriage between God and Israel, cf. *Mekh BaHodesh* 3 on Exod 19:17 (Laut. 11:218–19); *ExodR* 46 (101a). Paul claims the same role in 2 Cor 11:2 (cf. below, p. 211 n. 268).

115 Batey, in *New Testament Nuptial Imagery*, (49), agrees: "The identification of the Bride with the messianic community which at present is being received by Jesus is unmistakable." Batey also notes (50) that if this saying of John the Baptist is authentic and preserves a genuine pre-canonical tradition, it could be the earliest use of nuptial imagery in the NT.

4.3.4.2 The Voice of the Bridegroom: Echoes of Jeremiah and the Canticle

One important element particular to John 3:29 is the "voice of the bridegroom." This expression occurs four times in Jeremiah, three times in a context of condemnation and once in a context of consolation and hope (Jer 7:34; 16:9; 25:10; 33:11).[116] Worthy of note is Jeremiah's first mention of the disappearance of the "voice of the bridegroom and voice of the bride" (Jer 7:34) as a result of the imminent doom of the Temple which has become a "den of thieves" (7:11). This is the verse that the synoptics cite to justify Jesus' action in cleansing the Temple.[117] Now, seemingly in response to Jeremiah, after Jesus has foretold the rise of the new Temple of his body, John rejoices at hearing again the bridegroom's voice. McWhirter shows, however, that the passage that reveals the most similarities with John 3:29 is Jer 33:10–11. She cites six instances of verbal and circumstantial correspondences between both passages: (1) both locate the action in Judea (John 3:22); (2) both refer to the "voice of the bridegroom;" (3) both feature the bridegroom in the company of the bride; (4) both celebrate the presence of the matrimonial couple (as opposed to Jer 7:34, 16:9, 25:10, and Bar 2:23 which foretell their absence); (5) both state that someone hears (ἀκούω) the voice of the bridegroom; and (6) both associate the bridegroom's voice with great joy and gladness (χαρμοσύνη/ χαρά).[118] John's allusions to Jer 33:10–11 thus imply that Jesus is the bridegroom whose joyous return was prophesied by Jeremiah. He is also presumably the messianic "righteous branch from David" mentioned in the same context by the prophet (Jer 33:15). Significant is also the fact that the voice of the bridegroom was to be heard "as they bring thank offerings to the house of the Lord" (Jer 33:11). This establishes yet another connection between the bridegroom and the Temple that is at the center of attention in John 2:13–22.

Cambe and Feuillet have also noted that the bride and bridegroom, the friend of the bridegroom and the bridegroom's voice are found in the Song of Songs, though these elements are disjointed and not all found in a single verse as in Jer 33:11.[119] Both Cant 2:8–14 and 5:2–4 describe the woman's joyful response to the voice of the beloved. This is, however, the only connection between John 3:29 and these passages. Stronger parallels are found in Cant 8:13:

116 Cf. section 1.2.2 above, p. 8.

117 Cf. Matt 21:12–13; Mark 11:15–17; Luke 19:45–46.

118 McWhirter, *The Bridegroom Messiah and the People of God*, 54–56.

119 Cambe, "L'influence du Cantique des Cantiques sur le Nouveau Testament," 15; Feuillet, "Le symbolisme de la colombe dans les récits évangéliques," 540.

> You who dwell in the gardens, the companions listen for your voice – Let me hear it! (Cant 8:13)

While the MT is in the feminine, referring to the bride (הַיּוֹשֶׁבֶת בַּגַּנִּים), the LXX is in the masculine (ὁ καθήμενος ἐν κήποις), addressing the beloved man. Cambe proposes that John the Baptist is appropriating to himself the role of the Song's companions as he hears the bridegroom's voice – the voice of Jesus. Winandy and McWhirter are right in saying that these allusions are far less convincing than the links between John 3:29 and Jer 33:10–11. However, the strong similarities between two other Johannine passages and the Canticle, where Jesus is identified with the Song's beloved (John 12:1–3 and 20:1–18)[120] render the connection between John 3:29 and Cant 8:13 possible.

4.3.4.3 The Substance of John's Mystical Marriage

The Gospel of John's first three chapters reveal a subtle but sustained nuptial imagery throughout, from the sandals of the bridegroom-Messiah (pointing to the levirate law) to the wedding at Cana (modeled on the Sinai revelation) where Jesus provides a miraculous abundance of wine for the wedding guests, to John the Baptist's confession of the bridegroom-Messiah recalling the voice of the bridegroom of Jeremiah and of the Canticle. But one crucial question remains: in what consists the wedding between Christ and his ecclesial bride? The answer is found in the primary response to which the evangelist constantly invites those who come into the presence of the bridegroom-Messiah: this desired response is *faith*. The reason why the Logos became flesh and came as the Messiah is to grant light and life to men (1:4–9) so that they may become children of God (1:12). These gifts are acquired when men "believe through him" and "believe in his name" (1:7, 12). This faith is not just an abstract intellectual assent but is expressed through a close communion with Jesus: The first two disciples "follow him" and "stay with him" (1:37–39, 43) – an expression that perhaps carries nuptial connotations. Faith is also the response of Nathanael as he encounters Jesus (1:49–50), of the disciples at Cana when Jesus manifests his glory (2:11), and of the same disciples after the resurrection when they remember Jesus' words concerning the temple of his body (2:22).

The theme of faith continues in chapter 3 with Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus: in order to find salvation and eternal life it is necessary to believe in the Son of Man and Son of God (3:14–18, 36). But here it becomes evident that a second action is required of those who wish to find eternal life and enter the kingdom of God through communion with the bridegroom-Messiah:

120 See below, pp. 166 and 184.

this is the "new birth" or "birth from above" of "water and the Spirit" (3:3–8). While Nicodemus fails to understand what this means, the context in John 3 indicates that this new birth of water and the Spirit is *baptism*. Water baptism was already introduced in the Gospel narrative in the ministry of John, Jesus' precursor. Little is said about the effect of John's baptism in the Fourth Gospel, apart from the fact that he baptized so that Jesus "might be manifested to Israel" (1:31), but we know from the synoptic tradition and Acts that this was a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins (Matt 3:2, 6, 11; Mark 1:15; Luke 3:3; Acts 19:4).[121] In contrast to his own baptism, John announces that Jesus will baptize in the Holy Spirit (1:31–33). Since Jesus also baptizes in water (3:22), the implication is that the water-baptism which he administers is the same as the baptism ἐν πνεύματι ἁγίῳ announced by John[122] and the new birth "of water and the Spirit" that is required to enter the kingdom of God and receive eternal life. This gift flows out of God's great love for the world declared in 3:16, where the evangelist anticipates the end of the story as to how this love will ultimately be revealed, namely through the sacrificial gift of His Son. It is also related to a moment of the Exodus: the lifting of the son of Man is compared with Moses' lifting up the serpent in the wilderness (3:14–15; cf. Num 21:9). Baptism is also the spiritual enlightenment that enables men to escape the world's darkness and come into the light of the Logos and of the kingdom of God (1:4–9; 3:19–21).[123]

To those who see Jesus as a competing practitioner of the same ritual, John replies that the baptism of Jesus, the bridegroom-Messiah, must now take precedence over his own (3:22–30). Just as the water of the Jewish rites of purification stood in the background of the new Messianic wine (2:6), here too the baptism of Jesus is set in contrast with Jewish purification rites (3:25). Perhaps the predominance of ritual water and baptism alongside the nuptial imagery of chapters 1–3 also alludes to the idea of a nuptial bath, an idea that was suggested by Ezekiel and is developed by the author of Ephesians.[124] The nuptial union between Christ and his followers is therefore accomplished through faith in him and baptism in water, and communion between them is attained through the divine gift of the Spirit "without measure"

121 On John's baptism, cf. also Koester, *Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel*, 178.

122 Cf. Dodd, *Interpretation* 310.

123 This is further exposed in John 9:5–7, where the opening of the eyes of the blind man is accomplished through a washing in water from the pool of Siloam. On the early Christian understanding of baptism as enlightenment, cf. Heb 6:4; 10:32; Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, 1:381.

124 Cf. above, p. 13 and below, p. 221.

(3:34). Moreover, the mystical marriage is literally a *hieros gamos* between heaven and earth, between the one "who comes from above" and those who are "from the earth" (3:31). Dodd's discussion on the Logos may prove useful here:

> The incarnation of the Logos, is . . . the descent of the Son of Man, or heavenly Man, into the lower sphere, the realm of σάρξ. It is the heavenly man alone . . . who, having descended, ascends to heaven again. His descent and ascent open to men the possibility of receiving eternal life, that is, of ascending to the sphere of πνεῦμα; in other words, the possibility of rebirth. The possibility becomes an actuality for those who have faith in the Son – which is tantamount (in terms of the Prologue) to 'receiving the Logos', with the consequent ἐξουσία to be children of God.[125]

Dodd's reflection may be taken further when considered in light of John's nuptial aspect. When the Logos became flesh he 'tabernacled' among men so that they could see the δόξα of the Father. The divine δόξα dwelt in Jesus' σάρξ when the heavenly Logos took on earthly human nature. We remember that the Tabernacle and Holy of Holies were understood to be a nuptial chamber in early Judaism. In their union with the bridegroom-Messiah by faith, through the gift of the Holy Spirit obtained in the nuptial bath of baptism, therefore, those who believe in Jesus are introduced into the nuptial chamber, so to speak, so that they too may contemplate the divine δόξα and be joined to it. This seems to be John's idea of the mystical marriage between Jesus the bridegroom and his ecclesial bride. From there it is but a small step to arrive at the Pauline doctrine of the body of the believer which becomes a sanctuary of the Holy Spirit as a result of the union with the bridegroom-Messiah. The mystical consummation of the marriage as a one-flesh union between heavenly bridegroom and earthly bride, however, must still wait until chapter six of the Gospel to be disclosed.

4.3.5 *The Woman at the Well: Living Water and New Worship* (*John 4:4–42*)

Following the Baptist's declaration that Christ is the bridegroom and his followers are his bride, the next chapter brings a concrete example of a woman encountering Jesus in a "betrothal-type scene" that turns to a discussion of living water, husbands and marriage, places of worship, the coming of the Messiah, and ends with many people from the woman's community coming to faith in Jesus. The new order of worship that was announced in

125 Dodd, *Interpretation*, 305.

the cleansing of the Temple now takes on a nuptial dimension through the redemptive presence and action of the bridegroom-Messiah. The close relation between the account of the Samaritan woman at the well and the first three chapters of the gospel was already noticed by C.H. Dodd, who saw John 2:1–4:42 as bound together by a single theme, best characterized by Paul's expression: "The old things have passed away, see, the new have come!" (2 Cor 5:17). In 2:10 the water of the old purifications is replaced by wine; in 2:14–19 the old Temple makes way for a new one in the risen body of the Messiah; chapter 3 speaks of a new birth; and chapter 4 contrasts Jacob's ancient well with Jesus' 'living water,' and the ancient cults of Jerusalem and Mount Gerizim with the new worship 'in spirit and in truth.'[126]

4.3.5.1 Echoes of the Patriarchs

Already in the second century, Origen compared the episode of the Samaritan woman at the well with three well-known OT "betrothal-type scenes" where a man on a journey meets a maiden at a well and the story ends with a marriage. In his *Commentary on John*, Origen compared the Samaritan woman with Rebekah in Gen 24:1–67, and in his *Homily on Genesis* he extended the connection to the stories of Jacob and Rachel in Gen 29:1–20, and Moses and Zipporah in Exod 2:15–22.[127] Origen saw in the OT well-scenes prefigurations of Jesus' encounter with the Samaritan woman, which is itself a type of the marriage between Christ and the Church: "There, one comes to the wells and the waters that brides may be found; and the Church is united to Christ in the bath of water."[128]

McWhirter (2006) has surveyed the recent scholarship on John 4:4–42 and brought a number of new insights into the matter.[129] Like others before her, she notes that all three accounts of Gen 24, Gen 29 and Exod 2 reveal details of plot, characters, setting and diction that also appear in John 4. A traveling man stops at a well (φρέαρ) and is met there by a woman who comes to draw water (John 4:4–7; Gen 24:10–15; 29:1–9; Exod 2:15–16). One of them

126 Cf. Dodd, *Interpretation*, 297; Beasley-Murray, *John*, 31.

127 Origen, *Commentary on the Gospel of John* 13.175–78, tr. Heine, 105–6; *Homily on Genesis. Gen*. 10.5, tr. Heine, 167; cf. McWhirter, *The Bridegroom Messiah*, 1.

128 Origen, *Hom. Gen*. 10.5.

129 Cf. *The Bridegroom Messiah*, 6–7 for McWhirter's summary of recent scholarship on John 4:4–42, and pp. 58–76 for her own analysis of the scene. Cf. also Fehribach, *The Women in the Life of the Bridegroom*, 45–81; Koester, *Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel*, 47–50; Kerr, *The Temple of Jesus' Body*, 167–204; Carmichael, "Marriage and the Samaritan Woman;" Coloe, *God Dwells with Us*, 85–113; Um, *The Theme of Temple Christology in John's Gospel*, 130–188.

draws water from a well and gives it to the other (discussed in John 4:7–15 and enacted in Gen 24:16–20; 29:10; Exod 2:17). The woman then rushes home to tell her family about the stranger, the family proceeds to offer him hospitality (John 4:28–29, 40; Gen 24:28–33; 29:12–14; Exod 2:18–19), and the story leads to a betrothal and marriage – literal in the OT stories and inferred in the Gospel. In addition to these common points to all four narratives, three other details are found only in the Genesis stories, being absent from the Moses-Zipporah encounter: first, the question of the woman's eligibility for marriage in terms of her family/ethnic background and current marital status (positive for Rebekah and Rachel, but negative for the Samaritan woman); second, the initial hidden identity of the traveler, which is only revealed later in the story; and third, the interest generated by the stranger leading to someone coming to the well to meet him.[130] Though Gen 24 displays a few parallels with John 4 that are not found in Gen 29 (the traveler's arrival in a πόλις; the use of the words πηγή, ἀντλέω, ὑδωρ, and πίνω; and the request for a drink of water), McWhirter argues that some unique characteristics of the narrative present only in Gen 29:1–20 and John 4:4–42 are a strong indicator that John alludes most directly to the encounter between Jacob and Rachel.[131] These characteristics are the time of day in "broad daylight" (Gen 29:7) or "about noon" (John 4:6), the use of the verb ἔρχομαι to denote the arrival of the woman (Gen 29:9, John 4:7), and especially the central role of Jacob, who is the main character of the Genesis narrative and is mentioned three times in John: both scenes occur at the same place, at Jacob's well (John 4:6), near the plot of land that he gave to his son Joseph (John 4:5), and the Samaritan woman is a descendant of Jacob (John 4:12). Moreover, just as Jacob was a man on a journey who became a bridegroom, Jesus is identified as a bridegroom just a few verses prior to his encounter with the woman (John 3:29). One difference, however, is significant: While the encounter between Jacob and Rachel ends with a marriage, John's account does not lead to a marriage but rather to many Samaritans from the woman's city coming to faith in Christ (4:39–42). This correspondence between marriage and faith in Jesus is entirely consistent with the same correlation that was seen in chapters 2 and 3. McWhirter further notes how the elements found in Gen 29:1–20 become vehicles for John's central themes, which I will now briefly summarize.

130 McWhirter, *The Bridegroom Messiah*, 60–61.

131 Cf. also Carmichael, "Marriage and the Samaritan Woman," 336–37; Kerr, *The Temple of Jesus' Body*, 171–72.

4.3.5.2 Jesus and the Samaritan Woman in Light of Gen 29:1–20

Water from the Well and Eternal Life

Jesus asks the woman for a drink of water as a rhetorical device to tell her about the "living water" that he has to offer her.[132] Unlike the ordinary water from Jacob's well,[133] the living water that Jesus promises will become "a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life" (John 4:14) in whoever drinks it. This attractive offer tangibly illustrates the gift of eternal life that was conceptually introduced in the previous chapters: The prologue stated that the Logos is the source of eternal life (1:4); Jesus revealed to Nicodemus that this eternal life is shared with those who believe in the Son of God-Bridegroom-Messiah (3:15–16, 36) and are joined with him in a nuptial union (3:29) entered through baptism (3:5, 22). This finds now a practical application as the narrative moves from the waters of baptism to Jesus' offer of living water, source of eternal life, to the Samaritan woman in the "betrothal-type scene" at the well. The contrast between the water of Jacob's well and Jesus' living water thus recalls again the contrast between old and new, law and grace (1:17), ancient Wisdom and newly revealed Logos, between the water of purification and the new wine at Cana, and between the water of John's baptism and the new birth "of water and the Spirit."

Eligibility for Marriage and Worship in Spirit and in Truth

A second point of contact between Gen 29 and John 4 is the woman's eligibility. Whereas Rachel is a beautiful young virgin from Jacob's family (and therefore a perfect candidate for marriage with him), the Samaritan woman's ethnic/religious background and her irregular marital situation, having had five husbands and currently in an illicit relationship with a sixth man, would normally render her ineligible for communion with the Jewish Messiah. Numerous commentators have seen in the woman's five husbands a symbol of the five religious cults that were brought into Samaria after the Assyrian conquest (cf. 2 Kgs 17:29–31), in the sixth man who is not her husband the syncretistic cult of YHWH that

132 The offer of living waters would be an indication of Jesus' messianic claims according to 1 Enoch 48:1; 49:1, which associates the Messiah with "an inexhaustible spring of righteousness, and many springs of wisdom surrounded it, and all the thirsty drank from them and were filled with wisdom."

133 The memory of "Jacob's well" is not found in Genesis but rather in the targumic tradition, which recalls that the well where Jacob met Rebekah overflowed, "and the water rose to its edge, and continued to overflow all the time he was in Haran" (Tg. Yer. I, II and Neof. Gen 28:10). Jesus' promise of living waters seems to assume Jacob's miraculous drawing of water. Cf. Neyrey, "Jacob Traditions," 423; Coloe, *God Dwells With Us*, 91.

was offered in illicit high places (2 Kgs 17:32–33, 41),[134] and in the Samaritan woman a representative of the Samaritan people.[135] McWhirter adds that three other instances of verbal and circumstantial correspondence make the allusion to 2 Kings most probable: First, both passages strongly emphasize the differences between Samaritan and Jewish worship of God with the frequent use of the verb προσκυνέω (2 Kgs 17:35–36; John 4:20–24); second, both attribute the differences between Jews and Samaritans to ancestral customs (2 Kgs 17:41; John 4:20); and third, both passages state that the Samaritans do not know the God of Israel (2 Kgs 17:26; John 4:22). The evidence, therefore, seems strong enough to indicate that "the Samaritan woman with her six men is like the Samaritan people with their six religions."[136] But whereas in the former order of things the Samaritans worshiped "what they do not know," the bridegroom-Messiah now announces to her that the cultic dispute between Gerizim and Jerusalem will soon fade into oblivion because "the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth" (John 4:23). Significant is the reference to the "hour," pointing again to Christ's crucifixion and resurrection as source of the new worship in spirit and in truth. The ambiguous, simultaneous use of the future and present tenses indicates that the hour has in a sense arrived, but in another sense is not quite here yet. Jesus tells the woman that at that "hour," her Samaritan background will no longer be an obstacle to the true worship of the Father. Unbeknown to her, John is also implying to his reader that her negative marital and religious baggage no longer constitute an obstacle to entering into the mystical nuptial relationship with the Messiah that was announced in the previous chapters.[137]

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134 Cf. McWhirter, *The Bridegroom Messiah*, 69–70 and n. 78 for the list of modern proponents of this view; cf. Dodd, *Interpretation*, 313; Barrett, *The Gospel according to St. John*, 235; Fehribach, *Women in the Life of the Bridegroom*, 58–69; Kerr, *The Temple of Jesus' Body*, 179.

135 This representative role is seen in the use of pronouns in the dialogue between Jesus and the woman about the true form of worship. They begin to speak in the first and second person singular (ἐγώ, σύ), but soon switch to the plural (ἡμεῖς, ὑμεῖς) as the focus moves from Jesus and the woman to the Jewish and Samaritan people as a whole.

136 Cf. McWhirter, *The Bridegroom Messiah*, 71. Other commentators dispute this allegorical interpretation, chiefly on the basis that that 2 Kgs 17 lists five foreign nations who worship not five but seven foreign gods. Cf. Brown, *The Gospel According to John I–XII*, 171.

137 Carmichael ("Marriage and the Samaritan Woman") expands upon the idea of Jesus' spiritual marriage with the Samaritan woman, representative of the Samaritan community. He also explores the connection of this marriage to the prophetic nuptial tradition and to the sixth day of creation, considering in John 4 the idea of the creation of a male/female relationship, and comparing the notion of their "being fruitful and multiplying" with the Samaritan community coming to faith.

The implication of Jesus' words is twofold: cultic and nuptial. On the one hand, Jesus' announcement of a new worship "in spirit and in truth" alongside his declaration that he is the Messiah (vv. 25–26) means that the dawn of a new era of Israel's cult has arrived. On the other, John's allusion to the courtship between Jacob and Rachel implies that

> Jesus replaces the former "husbands" of the woman with the true *ba'al*, viz., himself. Since the woman is portrayed as accepting Jesus as Messiah (4:39), he effectively becomes her *ba'al*; and he replaces Samaritan expectations when they too confess him as "Savior of the world" (4:42). The Jacob matrimonial allusions then seem to lie in Jesus' becoming the husband/lord of these new converts, even his replacement of their former allegiances.[138]

Jacob's Self-Disclosure and Jesus' Messianic Identity

The climax of both stories is the revelation of the traveler's hidden identity: Jacob reveals himself to Rachel after watering Laban's flock (Gen 29:10–12); Jesus discloses his messianic identity to the woman after discussing the living water (John 4:25–26). This is another personalized revelation to the woman of what had been already announced earlier by John the Baptist (John 1:41; cf. 3:28).

Rachel's Report and the Samaritan Woman's Testimony

After Jacob reveals his identity to Rachel, she runs home to tell her father Laban about the unexpected visitor (Gen 29:12). Likewise, the Samaritan woman goes into the city and calls her fellow citizens to come and see the man who may be

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138 Neyrey, "Jacob Traditions and the Interpretation of John 4:10–26," 426. A similar connection between a well, matrimonial imagery and cultic sacrifice/worship is attested in the Midrash on the Song of Songs. Cant 4:13's image of the beloved woman's "shoots" as an "orchard of pomegranates" is identified by the Midrash with Miriam's well, which provided wine for the drink offerings of the Israelites in the desert. "Thy God will one day make thee like an orchard of pomegranates (Cant 4:13) in the Messianic era. What is that? The well [of Miriam]. Whence did the Israelites procure wine for drink offerings all the forty years that they spent in the wilderness? R. Johanan said: From the well" (*CantR* 4.12.3). Targumic tradition tells us that Miriam's well was the same as Jacob's well. Cf. Tg. Yer. I Num 21:17–18; Neyrey, "Jacob Traditions," 422. Elsewhere, a well is the source of the beautiful ornaments that were worn by the Israelite women at that time: "Whence did the Daughters of Israel obtain wherewith to deck themselves and gladden their husbands all the forty years that they were in the wilderness? R. Johanan said: From the well; and so it says 'a fountain of gardens, a well of living waters'" (*CantR* 4.14.1). Cf. Neyrey, "Jacob Traditions," p. 425 n. 25.

the Messiah (John 4:28–29). This is another courtship application of a theme introduced in the prologue, namely that of testimony. Just as John the Baptist came "for testimony, to give witness" ("εἰς μαρτυρίαν ἵνα μαρτυρήσῃ") to Jesus so that "all might believe through him" (John 1:7–8), the Samaritans come to believe in Jesus thanks to "the word of the woman who testified" ("διὰ τὸν λόγον τῆς γυναικὸς μαρτυρούσης") (John 4:39).

Offer of Hospitality, Betrothal and Faith

In both Genesis 29:13–14 and John 4:40, the people who were brought to the well by the woman invite the traveler home. Laban brings Jacob into his house, and the Samaritans ask Jesus to stay (μεῖναι) with them, "and He stayed (ἔμεινεν) there two days." This is yet another echo of chapter 1, where the disciples ask Jesus where he is staying ("ποῦ μένεις;") and then at his invitation remain (ἔμειναν) with him that day (1:38–39). The idea of "staying" with the bridegroom-Messiah, recurring frequently in John, is a fitting conclusion to the nuptial imagery of the narrative. Betrothal is not the end of a love story but rather its beginning, when husband and wife commit to "stay" together to found a home and family. But whereas the story of Jacob and Rachel ends with a wedding, the story of Jesus and the Samaritan woman ends with many of the Samaritans believing in him (John 4:39, 41–42). This is in effect not only a spiritual wedding but also a new, spiritual "birth" (3:5) coming out of the symbolic union of Jesus and the woman. This is a fitting fulfillment of the ultimate reason why the Word became flesh, as set in the prologue: to believe in the Logos, Son of Man and Son of God (1:7, 12, 49–50; 2:11, 22; 3:14–18) and enter into a nuptial relationship with the bridegroom-Messiah (3:29) for the sake of attaining eternal life through communion with him and the gift of the Spirit, thereby becoming children of God (1:12).

4.3.5.3 Living Waters Flowing out of the New Temple

The Symbolism of Living Water: Word and Spirit

The theme of water thus moves from the waters of John's baptism in chapter 1, to the water of Jewish purification in chapter 2, to Jesus' new birth "of water and the spirit" in chapter 3, to the discussion of Jesus' living water in chapter 4.[139] We have already briefly reviewed the symbolism of water in prophetic

139 On the symbolism of water in the Fourth Gospel cf. Koester, *Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel*, 175–203; Um, *The Theme of Temple Christology*, 130–166; Ng, *Water Symbolism in John*; Jones, *The Symbol of Water in the Gospel of John*.

and wisdom literature in our discussion on Sirach 24, and it behooves us to return to this topic here.[140] Water typically symbolizes either divine revelation or the Holy Spirit in biblical imagery.[141] It is a symbol of God's word or of the knowledge of the Lord in the prophets (cf. Isa 11:9; 55:1, 10–11; Hab 2:14), and it is extended to wisdom in later writings (cf. Prov 13:14; 16:22; 18:4). Water in the OT is also a symbol of the Holy Spirit (cf. Isa 32:15; 44:3; Joel 2:28; Ezek 36:25–27) and sometimes of God Himself, who is called a fountain of living waters (Isa 33:21; Jer 2:13; 17:13). Geographically, water is associated with the Garden of Eden (Isa 51:3; Ps 36:7–10; Sir 24:25–27), with the Temple (Ezek 47:1–12; Joel 3:17–18; Zech 14:8), and with the eschatological redemption (Isa 12:3; 35:1, 6–7; 41:17–19).[142] Anthropologically, it is a sign of the restoration of the soul (Isa 44:3–4; 58:11; Ezek 36:25–27) and it is also characteristic of love imagery (Cant 4:12–15; Prov 5:15–18).

John 4 most strongly evokes Sirach 24, not only because it encapsulates all the the above themes in compact fashion, but also because in John 4:13–14a ("Every one who drinks of this water will thirst again, but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst") Jesus seems to compare his living water to the waters of wisdom spoken of by Ben Sira: "those who drink me will thirst for more" (Sir 24:21). The two seemingly contradictory statements really say the same thing, namely, that the person who drinks of the supernatural water will be fully satisfied, so that he will want it in ever increasing measure and will never need anything else. We recall that Wisdom is identified with the Torah in Sirach 24, filling men with wisdom like the four rivers of Eden and having the likeness of the ever-widening river flowing out of Ezekiel's Temple (Ezek 47:1–12).[143] This description of

140 See above, p. 77f. Water is a symbol of Torah also in rabbinic tradition. Cf. *Sifre Deut* 48 and below, p. 306.

141 Cf. Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, 1:178–79; Schnackenburg, *The Gospel According to St John*, 431–31; Coloe, *God Dwells With Us*, 93–94.

142 As Um demonstrates, these associations are consistently sustained in Second Temple literature, where water is a symbol representing life in three temporal settings: as a life-giving symbol in the Garden of Eden (2 En. 8; Apoc. Ab. 21:6; Jos. Asen. 2:17–20; 1QH 14:12–18; 16:4–26), as a life-giving blessing in the present age (1 En. 26:1–3; 28:1–3; 30:1–2; 89:28; 4 Ezra 6:42–48; Sib. Or. 4:15–17; Apoc. Ab. 7:4), and as a prophetic symbol of the end-time blessing in the new creation (1 En. 60:20–22; 76:6–13; 2 Bar. 10:11; 29:5–8; 36:3–4; 39:7; 72:1–2; T. Jud. 24:4; T. Job 33:6–7; T. Adam 2:10). Cf. Um, *The Theme of Temple Christology in John's Gospel*, 15–67 (esp. his summary on pp. 65–67).

143 See above, pp. 77–80.

Ezekiel's eschatological Temple is the other passage that likely stands in the background of John 4. Just as the waters that flowed from Ezekiel's sanctuary brought healing, abundance and life (Ezek 47:9, 12) so now a "fountain of water springing up into everlasting life" flows out of Jesus, the new Temple.[144] The miraculous properties of healing, abundance, and life are attested throughout the Fourth Gospel, such as the healing of the official's son (John 4:46–54), the multiplication of the loaves and fish (6:1–15), and the raising of Lazarus (11:1–44).

Jacob, Jesus, and the Temple

Jesus' announcement of a new spiritual worship and his identification with Ezekiel's Temple is the logical continuation of the prologue's revelation that the Logos "tabernacled" among us, and of the announcement in chapter 2 that Jesus' body is a new Temple. The Temple motif is also perhaps in the background of the woman's awareness that Jews refer to Jerusalem as "the place (ὁ τόπος) where one ought to worship" (John 4:20) since, as we recall, a strong tradition in Judaism sees ὁ τόπος (המקום) as referring to the Temple.[145] Given the close correlation of John 4 with the story of Jacob, it is also worth noting that several rabbinic sources associate Jacob with Temple worship, asserting that he was endowed with special knowledge concerning the future sanctuary. We recall Jesus' allusion to Jacob's ladder and its midrashic understanding as a sign of the Temple.[146] To cite a few other examples, in relating to Isaac's blessing of his son in Gen 27:27 the Targum compares the smell of Jacob's garments with the smell of incense offered in the Temple, while the Midrash associates the smells with the Temple itself, its destruction and future reconstruction:[147]

144 Cf. Coloe, *God Dwells With Us*, 94–96.

145 Cf. above, p. 136 n. 81.

146 See section 4.3.2.7 above, p. 134.

147 Neyrey ("Jacob Traditions," esp. p. 420) demonstrates that although the rabbinic sources he cites are later than John's Gospel, many of the Jacob traditions that they contain are presupposed by the argument in John 4 and thus probably existed prior to the Gospel.

> See, the smell of my son is like the smell of the fragrant incense that will be offered on the mountain of the Sanctuary, which has been called 'field which the Lord blessed,' and where it has pleased him to make his Shekhinah dwell. (Tg. Ps. Jon. Gen 27:27)

> This verse teaches that the Holy One, blessed be He, showed him (Jacob) the Temple built, destroyed, and rebuilt. Thus: *See the smell of my son* is an allusion to the Temple built, as in the verse, "a sweet smell unto Me shall ye observe" (Num 28:2). *As the smell of the field* suggests it when destroyed, as in the verse, "Zion shall be ploughed as a field" (Mic 3:12); *which the Lord hath blessed* – this hints at it being rebuilt and perfected in the Messianic future, as it is said, "for there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life forever" (Ps 133:3). (Ge*nR* 65:23)[148]

Significantly, the Midrash on Gen 29:2 also associates the well where Jacob met Rachel with the presence of the *Shekhinah* at Mount Sinai, with the water coming out of the rock at Meribah after Moses struck it (Num 20:8; 21:16–17), and with the "drinking of the Holy Spirit" in Zion/the Temple during the water libation ceremony of the Feast of Tabernacles. Instead of quoting the text, we summarize its essential content in tabular form:[149]

> And he looked, and saw a well in the field; and behold, there were three flocks of sheep lying by it; for out of that well they watered the flocks. A large stone was on the well's mouth. (Gen 29:2)

Well in field (Gen 29:2)	**Sinai**	**Well in Desert/Meribah**	**Zion**
Three flocks of sheep	Priests, Levites, Israelites	Moses, Aaron, Miriam	Three festivals
Watered flocks out of the well	Hearing the Decalogue	Drew water for standard, tribe, family	Imbibing the Holy Spirit
Large stone on well's mouth	The *Shekhinah*	Stone was size of a small sieve.	Rejoicing of the place of the water drawing

148 Cf. Neyrey, "Jacob Traditions," 431.

149 *GenR* 70:8 on Gen 29:2 (Freedman 2:640–43; Neusner III:30–34).

The discussion of the ancient worship of the fathers located "on this mountain" (John 4:20–21) and the promise of a new worship "in Spirit and in truth" no longer bound to a central sanctuary also carry echoes of Isaiah's promise that foreigners will one day come and offer burnt offerings and sacrifices on the Lord's holy mountain in His house, called a "house of prayer for all nations" (Isa 56:6–7).[150] We recall that Ezekiel's Temple is closely associated with the "mountain of the Lord,"[151] identified with the Temple on Mount Zion and Jerusalem (Ps 2:6; 48:1–2; Isa 2:2–3) from which flowed a sacred river (Ps 46:4), and with the Garden of Eden (Isa 51:3; Ezek 47:12; Ps 36:7–10).

In summary, the fourth chapter of John's Gospel depicts the encounter between Jesus, the Bridegroom-Messiah, and the Samaritan woman, representative of her Samaritan community, as a symbolic betrothal between them. The Samaritan cult (and, likewise, the Jerusalem cult), considered by many to be symbolized by the woman's five husbands, is now to be replaced by the new worship in spirit and in truth centered around the person of Jesus who, as source of the living water of eternal life, is identified with the mountain of the Lord and Ezekiel's Temple. Out of this symbolic union between Jesus and the woman comes the "new birth" of many Samaritans coming to faith in Christ.

4.3.6 *Bread from Heaven and One-Flesh Union* (*John 6*)

The sixth chapter of the Gospel is set at the time of a second Passover, when Jesus feeds the five thousand by multiplying loaves and fish (John 6:1–15). As Beasley-Murray and others have noted, the proximity of Passover, the identification of Jesus as the awaited prophet who was to come into the world (v. 14; cf. Deut 18:15), and the ensuing discussion on the manna and bread from heaven indicate that the miracle is fulfilling the hope of a second Exodus.[152] The Exodus setting recalls the nuptial passages of the prophets who hoped that the renewal of the marriage covenant between God and Israel would take place in the wilderness as in days of old (cf. Hos 2:14). The Eucharistic connotations of both the miracle and the ensuing discourse on the Bread of Life are well known: the formula recalling that Jesus took the loaves, "gave thanks" (εὐχαριστήσας) (6:11, also v. 23), and distributed them to those who were seated closely resembles the institution narratives in the synoptics and Paul. Other elements, such as the nearness of Passover, the idea of the body of Christ

150 This is the verse that Jesus quotes when he cleanses the Temple in the synoptics (Matt 21:13; Mark 11:17; Luke 19:46).

151 Cf. above, pp. 80–82.

152 Cf. Beasley-Murray, *John*, 88.

offered sacrificially for others, its identification with bread, the idea of eating his body and drinking his blood, and the reference to Judas' betrayal all point to the Eucharistic tradition of the primitive Church.[153]

Like the other signs in the Fourth Gospel, the goal of the miraculous multiplication is so that the people may believe in Jesus (6:29) and thereby receive eternal life (vv. 39–40). Yet as in the dialogue with Nicodemus, faith is an essential prerequisite to receive the gift of life, (6:47) but it is not enough. To live forever, one must also *eat* the bread of heaven, which is Jesus' own flesh (6:51). The sign (bread) points to the sacrament (Jesus' flesh), for it is the sacrament that unites heaven and earth: As living bread that came down from *heaven*, Jesus invites those *on earth* to eat this bread – his flesh and blood – to receive eternal life and the hope of resurrection on the last day (vv. 50–55). The result is mutual communion between Christ and the believer, again characterized by the verb μένω: "He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him" (ἐν ἐμοὶ μένει κἀγὼ ἐν αὐτῷ) (John 6:56).[154] Keeping in mind Jesus' role as bridegroom in the Fourth Gospel, the Eucharistic invitation to "eat his flesh" in order to "abide in him" sounds much like a veiled invitation to a mystical "one-flesh" nuptial union with him.

4.3.7 *Feast of Tabernacles and Eschatological Temple* (*John 7*)

In chapter 7, the narrative moves from Passover to the Feast of Tabernacles, and from the theme of the "Bread of Life" back to that of "living water." Jesus goes up to Jerusalem for Sukkot, and on the last day, the "great day of the feast," he proclaims: "If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. He who believes in me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart/belly (κοιλία) will flow rivers of living water" (John 7:37–38).[155] The Feast of Tabernacles had of course an intrinsic connection with water. In the days of the Temple, an

153 Cf. Matt 26:21–28; Mark 14:18–24; Luke 22:19–23; 1 Cor 11:23–24; Brown, *The Gospel According to John* I–XII, 243, 247–48, 284–87, 291–93; Hahn, "Temple, Sign and Sacrament," 121–22. Taylor ("Bread that is Broken – and Unbroken") shows that there are good grounds for believing that the Last Supper and early Eucharistic tradition were themselves based on a rite of breaking bread already known and practiced by Jesus and his disciples.

154 This formula of mutual abiding is very close to the Pauline idea of κοινωνία as a participation in the body and blood of Christ (1 Cor 10:16), as God's indwelling in the anthropic Temple of the Holy Spirit (2 Cor 6:14–16), and as the expression of Christ living in the believer, and of the believer living "by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me" (Gal 2:20).

155 On the *Sukkot* background to John 7, cf. MacRae, "The Meaning and Evolution of the Feast of Tabernacles;" Beasley-Murray, *John*, 113–14 and the bibliography on pp. 100–101; Coloe, *God Dwells With Us*, 115–143; Kerr, *The Temple of Jesus' Body*, 226–250.

integral part of its celebration was the daily libation ceremony when water was drawn from the pool of Shiloah and poured on the altar along with wine.[156] The main purpose of this ceremony was to invoke God's blessing for rain, for "at the Feast of Tabernacles judgment is made concerning the waters."[157]

The "great day of the feast" when Jesus spoke is presumably the *Hoshannah Rabbah* (the Great Supplication), known as the day of the final sealing of judgment which had begun a few weeks earlier at *Rosh Hashanah*. On the last day of the feast, believed to be the day when God judges the world for rainfall after the hot and dry months of the summer, the people's prayers for rain reached their climax. It was the height of the feast's eschatological expectation, which included prayers expressing hope for the speedy coming of the Messiah. It is within this context that Jesus announces that he is the source of living waters, and whoever "drinks from him" will in turn see living waters flow from his heart. John explains that "He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified" (John 7:39). It thus becomes clear that for John, the living water that Jesus discussed with the Samaritan woman represents the Holy Spirit, but it was not yet given because the "hour" of Jesus' glorification had not yet come. This adds to the complex interconnection of Johannine themes seen until now: The "hour" of Jesus – the time of his death and resurrection – is the moment when he is "glorified" (partially anticipated at Cana). It is also the moment when the Spirit is poured out. Throughout the Gospel there is an atmosphere of anticipation of Jesus' hour and glorification, a sense of "already but not yet," a tension between realized and future eschatology: the bridegroom-Messiah has arrived and is already in communion with his bride-people, but at the same time the gift of the Spirit must await his death and resurrection.

But what passage of scripture is Jesus referring to when he says "*as the scripture has said*, 'Out of his heart shall flow rivers of living water'" (John 7:38)?[158] These words do not match any passage of the MT or LXX, but they do hint at other passages that we have examined. When read in continuity

156 Cf. *m. Sukkah* 4:9.

157 *M. Rosh Hashanah* 1:2. Cf. *b. Rosh Hashanah* 16b: "where does the law say pour out water on the feast of tabernacles? Says the holy blessed God, pour out water before me, that the rains of the year may be blessed unto you."

158 On the interpretive difficulty of John 7:37–38, Daise ("If Anyone Thirsts, Let that One Come to Me . . .") proposes that John 7:37b–38a refers to LXX Isa 55:1 in order to connect thematically with John 7:33–36.

with chapter 4, one possibility is that John 7:38 alludes to the living waters flowing out of the eschatological Temple of Ezek 47:1–12. Supporting this is the fact that the rite of water libation at *Sukkot* was linked to the anticipation of the gift of water expected to flow from Jerusalem upon the establishment of the kingdom of God. The *Tosefta* (*Sukkah* 3:3–11) attests to the rite's connection with Ezekiel's living waters (and with those flowing out of Jerusalem in Zech 13:1 and 14:8), identifying the Water Gate though which the libation ceremony entered with the south gate of Ezekiel's Temple.[159] At the same time, the *Tosefta* calls these eschatological waters the "waters of creation" (מימי בראשית), and it associates the libations with the "well that was with Israel in the desert," referring to the water that came from the rock smitten by Moses during the desert wanderings (Exod 17:1–6; Num 20:8–11; 21:16–18). It also attests to the tradition that the rock moved and travelled with the Israelites in the desert:

> And so the well which was with the Israelites in the wilderness was a rock, the size of a large round vessel, surging and gurgling upward, as from the mouth of this little flask, rising with them up onto the mountains, and going down with them into the valleys. Wherever the Israelites would encamp, it made camp with them, on a high place, opposite the entry of the Tent of Meeting. (*t. Sukkah* 3:11)

The water libation was also understood as the outpouring of the Holy Spirit from the "wells of salvation" spoken of by Isaiah 12:3:

> Says R. Joshua ben Levi, why is its name called the place of drawing water? because, from thence שואבים רוח הקודש, "they draw the Holy Spirit," as it is said, "and ye shall draw water with joy out of the wells of salvation (מִמַּעַיְנֵי הַיְשׁוּעָה)."[160]

159 Cf. Neusner, *Tosefta*, 574–76; Coloe, *God Dwells With Us*, 131–32.

160 *Y. Sukkah* 22b; *GenR* 70:8. Marcus ("Rivers of Living Water from Jesus' Belly") argues very plausibly that Jesus must be especially referring to Isa 12:3 because of the verse's association with the Feast of Tabernacles in this and other Talmudic passages (cf. *b. Sukkah* 48b; 50b), as well as the linguistic connection between Jesus' belly (κοιλία = מֵעִים) and Isaiah's "wells of salvation" (מַעַיְנֵי הַיְשׁוּעָה). Brown (*The Gospel According to John*, 1:321–23) mentions the following passages as possible background to John 7:38: Prov 18:4; Isa 58:11; Sir 24:30–33, but he especially favors the water flowing from the rock during the Exodus as described in the poetic commentaries of the psalms (Ps 105:40–41; 78:15–16; 114:8) and the water flowing from the Temple in Zech 14:8 and Ezek 47:1–11.

The context of the Feast of Tabernacles thus indicates that Jesus is again identifying himself with Ezekiel's Temple, in continuity with his self-identification as new Temple in John 2 and his offer of living waters in chapter 4, implying that the river of life will not come out of a physical structure but rather out of himself. Moreover, he will pass on this gift to his followers, for not only Jesus but also those who believe in him will become a source of living water. This is a further confirmation that the Incarnation of the Logos who became flesh and "tabernacled" among us is likened to God coming to dwell in His Temple. Jesus' signs and healings become the spiritual and allegorical embodiment of the healing waters flowing from God's house on His holy mountain that would bring life to the arid desert, quench the thirst of weary souls, release the outpouring of God's Spirit upon them (Isa 44:3–4, 58:11; Ezek 36:25–26) and bring them into communion with divine Wisdom (Sir 24). By extension – recalling the close relationship between Ezekiel's Temple, water and the Garden of Eden – Jesus, the bridegroom-Messiah and new spiritual temple, becomes the new source of the waters of Eden and the way back to paradise.

4.3.8 *The Anointing at Bethany* (*John 12:1–3*)

The Anointing of Jesus: Intertextual Puzzle

The next nuptial passage in John is the anointing at Bethany, which displays a number of possible allusions to the Song of Songs. Following Jesus' *Sukkot* discourse, the narrative continues with the implementation of the program outlined in the prologue and initiated in John 1:19–4:42. As the story unfolds, Jesus faces increasing opposition and hostility, and with the raising of Lazarus in chapter 11 the narrative begins to turn towards Jesus' own death. Like the sign of Cana, the raising of Lazarus is another anticipatory revelation of the δόξα of God and of Jesus (11:4, 40) that will be fully disclosed at Jesus' "hour." Then, six days before his final Passover, Jesus is invited to a supper in Bethany with Lazarus and his sisters Martha and Mary. The presence of Judas (v. 4) indicates that the other disciples are there, as well as possibly a number of other people (v. 9). During the meal, Lazarus is reclining at the table with Jesus while Martha serves the guests. But it is Mary who quickly becomes the center of attention:

> Then Mary took a pound of very costly oil of spikenard (μύρου νάρδου πιστικῆς πολυτίμου), anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped His feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the oil. (John 12:3)

All four Gospels include an account of a woman anointing Jesus (Matt 26:6–13; Mark 14:3–9; Luke 7:36–50), with notable differences between them. Matthew

and Mark place the event at Bethany like John, specifying this was at the house of Simon the Leper. Luke situates the scene at the house of a Pharisee who is identified as Simon (Luke 7:40). This initial setting suggests that all four narratives refer to the same event, but several divergences complicate the matter. Lazarus, Martha and Mary appear only in the Fourth Gospel, and the woman remains unidentified in the synoptics (for Luke she is "a sinner" Luke 7:37). The perfume brought by the woman is described in slightly different terms in each gospel:

Matt 26:7:	ἀλάβαστρον	μύρου	βαρυτίμου
Mark 14:3:	ἀλάβαστρον	μύρου νάρδου πιστικῆς	πολυτελοῦς
Luke 7:37:	ἀλάβαστρον	μύρου	
John 12:3:	λίτραν	μύρου νάρδου πιστικῆς	πολυτίμου

The synoptics have in common the alabaster flask (omitted in John), but only Mark and John specify that she is bringing "very costly oil of spikenard." Mark and Matthew have the woman pour the oil over Jesus' head while in Luke and John she pours it over his feet (Luke adds her tears) and wipes them with her hair. Only John specifies that "the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume." Finally, in Matthew, Mark and John, someone objects that the perfume was wasted and argues that the money should have been given to the poor, while Luke takes the account in a completely other theological direction. The variants between the four accounts thus result in an unsolvable puzzle of intertextuality.[161]

The King Anointed with Nard and the Song of Songs

Mary's use of her hair to wipe the feet of Jesus in the Johannine account has often been considered perplexing. The action is not a sign of penitence as in Luke, and her motivation for the anointing is unclear. Does this passage carry nuptial connotations? Winsor notes that on five occasions in the Song of Songs the beauty of the man or woman is described with a reference to his or her hair.[162] In Cant 4:1 and 6:5 the man compares his beloved's hair to a flock of goats going down from Gilead; Cant 5:11 describes the lover's wavy and black locks; and in Cant 7:5, the man tells his beloved "the hair of your head is like purple; A king is held captive by your tresses." This allusion to hair, however, is too weak to be really convincing.

161 Cf. Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, 1:449–52; Morris, *The Gospel According to John* (rev. ed.), 508–10.

162 Winsor, *A King is Bound in the Tresses*, 20–22.

More credible is the Gospel's possible allusion to Cant 1:12, noted by several scholars:[163] "While the king is at his table, my spikenard sends forth its fragrance" ("ἕως οὗ ὁ βασιλεὺς ἐν ἀνακλίσει αὐτοῦ νάρδος μου ἔδωκεν ὀσμὴν αὐτοῦ"). The verse has four characteristics in common with Mary's anointing at Bethany: a king on a couch, a loving woman, nard, and its fragrance. First, just as the lover of the Canticle is a king and bridegroom, reclining on a couch, so is Jesus a king (cf. John 1:49; 6:15; 12:13, 15; 18:33–19:22) and a bridegroom (cf. John 3:29) who reclines on a couch (ἀνακειμένων) with Lazarus. Second, both men are the object of a woman's intense loving attention – the beloved of the Canticle and Mary of Bethany. Third, the presence of the spikenard (נֵרְדְּ, νάρδος) is significant because in the entire OT and NT it appears only in the Canticle (1:12; 4:13, 14) and in Mark's and John's accounts of the anointing at Bethany.[164] Fourth, John's description of the fragrance of the perfume (ὀσμὴ μύρου) filling the house (not mentioned in the synoptic accounts) recalls the beloved's nard giving out its fragrance in Cant 1:12, as well as the prominence of scents and fragrances in other passages of the Canticle.[165] The Johannine text also seems to echo Cant 1:3 with its description of the beloved's name as poured ointment and the love of the maidens for him: "Because of the fragrance of your good ointments (ὀσμὴ μύρων σου), your name is ointment poured forth; Therefore the maidens love you."

Midrashic Parallels

Here too the Midrash on the Canticle may provide some helpful insights, despite its later dating. According to R. Judah, Cant 1:12 refers to the theophany at Mount Sinai when Israel declared their obedience to the Lord:

> What then is meant by *while the king was at his table*? While the supreme King of kings, the Holy One, blessed be He, was at His table in the firmament, Israel sent forth a fragrance before Mount Sinai and said, *All that the Lord has said we will do and obey* (Exod 24:7).[166]

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163 Cf. Winandy, "Le Cantique des Cantiques et le NT," 166; Cambe, "L'influence du Cantique," 15–17; Fehribach, *Women in the Life*, 93; McWhirter, *The Bridegroom Messiah*, 82–88; Winsor, "A King is Bound," 22–23, 25–27.

164 Winsor ("A King is Bound," p. 23) argues somewhat less convincingly that the adjective πιστικῆς (genuine, pure) in John 12:3 may be a corruption of τῆς στακτῆς ("of myrrh oil"), thus referring to Cant 1:13 where the beloved is described as "a bundle of myrrh" ("ἀπόδεσμος τῆς στακτῆς").

165 Cf. Cant 1:3–4; 2:13; 4:10–11; 7:9, 14.

166 *CantR* 1:12 §1 (Simon 77–78) and below, p. 331.

R. Eliezer and R. Akiba concur that the Canticle's king represents God in the firmament, adding their own contributions: For R. Eliezer, the smell of nard represents the pillars of smoke rising from Sinai when *the mountain was burning with fire* (Deut 4:11), while for R. Akiba, the fragrance is the *glory of the Lord* [*which*] *abode upon Mount Sinai* (Exod 24:16). We know that at least some elements of this tradition are genuinely Tannaitic because Cant 1:12 is associated with the Sinai theophany also in the *Mekhilta*, where God (the Canticle's lover/king) receives Israel (the Shulamite) "as a bridegroom comes forth to meet the bride."[167] Recalling the many connections between the Wedding at Cana and the narrative of the Sinai theophany,[168] one wonders whether these midrashic traditions might not stand in the background of the scene at Bethany. Could it be that the evangelist is not only subtly portraying Mary's anointing of Jesus' feet as the woman of Cant 1:12 whose "nard sends forth its fragrance" while the king reclines at his table, but also, as in the Midrash, the king receiving the woman "as a bridegroom comes forth to meet the bride" because of her loving devotion to him? This hypothesis gains more plausibility when one considers other midrashic traditions associated with Cant 1:12:[169] R. Pinchas not only identifies the verse with God's appearance on Sinai with thunders and lightnings of Exod 19:16, but also with the parable of a king who triumphantly enters a city after having ordered trumpets and horns to be sounded to awaken the population. This is intended to represent Moses rousing Israel and bringing them to meet God (Exod 19:17). Is it a coincidence that the Gospel recalls next how Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead (John 12:9–11, 17–18) as a sign that leads to the population of Jerusalem welcoming him into the city and acclaiming him as king of Israel (John 12:12–16)? The Midrash on Cant 12:3 continues with a tradition attributed to R. Judan recalling the moment when "Moses and Israel were still reclining and eating their paschal lambs in Egypt." Here, the nard represents "a pleasant odour from the spices of *Gan Eden*" that covers the unpleasant odor of the blood of the Passover. This Paschal context constitutes yet another link between the Midrash and the Johannine narrative, which is about to move into the account of the Last Supper and of Christ's Paschal sacrifice.

167 *Mekh BaHodesh* 3, 11:217–219 and below, p. 304.

168 See above, p. 130f.

169 *CantR* 1:12 §2–3 (Simon 79–80).

John and the Prophets: Bridegroom, Bride and Temple

Two additional observations may be made about the ὀσμὴ μύρου of John 12:3: first, the expression also occurs in LXX Jer 25:10, which curiously replaces the MT's "sound of millstones" with "the scent of ointment":

> And I will destroy from among them the voice of joy, and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom, and the voice of the bride, the scent of ointment (ὀσμὴν μύρου), and the light of a candle. (Jer 25:10 LXX)

As we have seen, this is one of the prophet's oracles about the voice of the bridegroom and the bride that is possibly alluded to in John 3:29. Could John's ὀσμὴ μύρου be an allusion to Jeremiah's ὀσμὴ μύρου accompanying the voices of the bridegroom and bride? Second, the word ὀσμή in the LXX usually refers to the pleasing odor of a sacrifice, and only four times does it refer to the fragrance of perfume (with three of these four references found in Cant 1:3–4 and Jer 25:10).[170] Could the evangelist be hinting at the impending sacrificial death of Jesus by emphasizing the pleasing ὀσμή of the sacrifice filling the house? This seems all the more likely since the narrative specifically tells us that Mary's anointing is oriented towards Jesus' death: The scene takes place six days before the Passover on which he would die (John 12:1), and Jesus himself defends the woman's action by announcing that "she has kept this for the day of my burial" (John 12:7).

Related to this sacrificial connotation, Hanson suggests that John 12 evokes the splendor of the restored Temple in Hag 2:6–9,[171] noting six parallels between them: First, both are associated with someone called "Joshua" (יְהוֹשֻׁעַ – Ἰησοῦς, Hag 2:4) or "Jesus" (יֵשׁוּעַ – Ἰησοῦς, John 12:1). Second, the thundering voice from heaven in John 12:28–29 is somewhat akin to the shaking in Hag 2:6–7. Third, the Greeks who seek Jesus in John 12:20 recall the nations bringing treasures into the Temple in Hag 2:7. Fourth, the fragrance of the nard that fills the house in John 12:3 could be an image of the glory filling the

170 For examples of ὀσμή referring to the odor of sacrifices, cf. Gen 8:21; Exod 29:18; Lev 1:9, 13, 17; 2:2.

171 "For thus says the LORD of hosts: Once again, in a little while, I will shake the heavens and the earth and the sea and the dry land; and I will shake all nations, so that the treasures of all nations shall come in, and I will fill this house with glory, says the LORD of hosts. The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, says the LORD of hosts. The glory of this latter house shall be greater than the former, says the LORD of hosts; and in this place I will give peace, says the LORD of hosts."

house in Hag 2:7. Fifth, the concern for money in John 12:4–6 is reminiscent of the silver and gold of Hag 2:8. Sixth, the glorification of the Son of Man announced in John 12:23 recalls the "glory of the latter house" spoken of by Hag 2:9. From these parallels Hanson concludes that "John understands Hag 2:6–9 as a prophecy of Jesus' death, burial and resurrection."[172]

I agree with McWhirter that Hanson's argument is not the most compelling, and some of his parallels seem forced. However, when one considers the importance of the Temple in the Fourth Gospel and the recurring theme of a new worship centered on the person of Jesus, the sacrificial allusion in John 12:3, 7, and the narrative resolutely moving towards his paschal sacrifice, one cannot entirely exclude the idea of a veiled reference to the Temple in John 12. Kerr arrives at a similar conclusion by a different way. He believes that Mary's anointing of Jesus is an act of worship on the basis of a number of verbal and circumstantial parallels with the revelation of divine glory in Isaiah 6.[173] The house in Bethany, filled with the fragrance of perfume, is thus a place of worship equivalent to the smoke-filled Temple/House of the Lord.

The association of Jesus with the king-bridegroom of the Song of Songs and Mary of Bethany as the Song's beloved woman would seem to portray Mary as fictitious betrothed/bride of Jesus, perhaps representative of the Jewish people, just as the Samaritan woman was representative of the Samaritan community in chapter 4.[174] Fehribach points out that the intimate act of anointing Jesus with perfume with her hair indicates a particularly close relationship between the two, most unusual for acquaintances of the opposite sex in first-century Judea. Perfume was usually reserved for burial rites, cosmetic purposes, and romantic purposes. Since the anointing of a man's feet with perfume was often associated with a romantic setting, and given the love of Jesus for Mary, Martha and Lazarus, it is conceivable that the anointing could have been understood as a romantic action.[175] Moreover, for Mary to let her hair down publicly in

172 Hanson, Anthony T., *The New Testament Interpretation of Scripture* (London: SPCK, 1980), 118–21, as quoted by McWhirter, *The Bridegroom Messiah*, 80–81.

173 These parallels include: the death of a king (Isa 6:1; John 12:33); the Lord/Jesus is lifted up (Isa 6:1; John 12:32); Isaiah sees God's/Jesus' glory (Isa 6:1; John 12:41); Isaiah sees the King/Jesus is king (Isa 6:5; John 12:13); Israel is blinded (Isa 6:9–10; John 12:40); and the house is filled with smoke/the fragrance of perfume (Isa 6:4; John 12:3). Cf. Kerr, *The Temple of Jesus' Body*, 201–203.

174 John consistently connects Mary with the Jews (John 11:31, 33, 45). Fehribach develops this argument in *The Women in the Life of the Bridegroom*, 86–93.

175 Cf. Fehribach, *The Women*, 88–89.

the presence of Jesus could possibly have been considered scandalous.[176] In this case, the fact that her action and physical contact with him are described as praiseworthy calls for a context in which the two would have been related, leading the reader to see Mary as the betrothed/ bride of Jesus, and the meal that he shared with her and her family at Bethany as a betrothal meal in preparation for his subsequent passion and death as his messianic wedding.

4.3.9 *The Last Supper as Wedding Ceremony?* (*John 13–17*)

4.3.9.1 The King and the Daughter of Zion

The day after the anointing in Bethany, Jesus enters Jerusalem. John associates his entrance into the city with the words of Zechariah: "Fear not, daughter of Zion; behold, your King is coming, sitting on a donkey's colt" (John 12:15; cf. Zech 9:9). The use of the term "daughter of Zion" in the singular, appearing only here and in Matt 21:5 in the NT, indicates that Jesus is making use of the well-known personification of the city of Jerusalem and evoking the rich OT imagery portraying her as virgin or mother.[177] Once again, Temple symbolism and nuptiality intersect: The verse recalls Zechariah's promise that God would dwell/tabernacle in her midst (וְשָׁכַנְתִּי בְתוֹכֵךְ – κατασκηνώσω, Zech 2:10). It also evokes Isaiah's promised salvation to the daughter of Zion, with God rejoicing over her as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride (Isa 62:4–5, 11). Yet more than recalling the former promises to the בַּת־צִיּוֹן, Jesus' entrance in Jerusalem signifies that his "hour" and glorification are now imminent (John 12:23, 27–28, 41; 13:1; 16:21, 32; 17:1).

4.3.9.2 Into the Father's House

Fehribach argues that John depicts Jesus' death as a blood sacrifice that establishes a patrilineal kinship group between him and his followers, which in effect makes it to be a messianic wedding between him and his bride. The crucifixion narrative is prepared by Jesus' "farewell discourse" at the Last Supper (13:1–17:26), which contains a number of Temple and nuptial allusions. Long ago, Chavasse proposed that Jesus, in the Last Supper, was "as much enacting a Marriage Feast as keeping the Passover." He claimed this on the basis that

176 This is the opinion of a majority of scholars: cf. Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, 450; Morris, *The Gospel According to John* (rev. ed.), 512. But Cosgrove ("A Woman's Unbound Hair"), after examining the social symbolism of a woman's unbound hair in the ancient Mediterranean world, concludes that the woman's behavior in Luke 7:38 (applying also to John 12) is not necessarily sexually suggestive but could express grief, gratefulness, or supplication.

177 Cf. above, p. 2 n. 5 and Huber, *Like a Bride Adorned*, 89–112.

the foundation of the OT marriage between YHWH and His people was the covenant between them, made and ratified by the Passover. Moreover, Chavasse argued that the outward ceremonies of the Last Supper suggest the customs of a first century Jewish marriage:

> The house was prepared as for the reception of the bridegroom who had absented himself with his friends; at a given signal, he and his party returned to find the room prepared for the wedding feast. The feast itself began with the prescribed hand-washing and benediction. Then the great winecup was filled, and the principal personage, taking it, and holding it, recited over it the prayer of bridal blessing. Then the men seated themselves. Only the men sat at the marriage supper. After the supper the bridegroom left the feast with the bride.[178]

It is worth examining a few themes in the farewell discourse that point to marriage/family and Temple symbolism. In anticipation of his death, Jesus says that he is going to "prepare a place" for his disciples in one of the "many dwelling places" that are in his "Father's house" (John 14:2–3). In the first century the wedding ceremony consisted in the groom bringing the bride into his house.[179] In this light, our text may well allude to the fact that as messianic bridegroom Jesus is taking his bride (the community of believers) into his Father's house.[180]

The Bridegroom's Love in John 13–17

One could easily say that the overarching theme of Jesus' farewell discourse is his love for his disciples. Of the 37 occurrences of the verb ἀγαπάω in the Fourth Gospel, 25 of them appear in chapters 13–17. Jesus introduces the topic by example, washing the feet of the disciples as the humble sign that "having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end" (John 13:1). He then proceeds to discuss the subject extensively, touching upon all dimensions and directions of the divine-human love, including the Father's love for Jesus (15:9; 17:23–24, 26) and for the disciples (14:21, 23; 17:23), Jesus' love for the Father (14:31) and for his disciples (13:1, 34; 14:21; 15:9), the exhortation to the disciples to abide/remain (μένω) in Jesus' love (15:9–10; 17:26), to love him back

178 Chavasse, *The Bride of Christ*, 60–61. Even though the institution narrative is not mentioned in John, it is virtually certain that the evangelist, along with the early Christian community, was well familiar with it. For a comparison of the synoptic and Johannine traditions of the Last Supper, cf. Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, 2:557–58.

179 Cf. Safrai, "Home and Family," *The Jewish People in the First Century*, 758.

180 Fehribach, *The Women in the Life of the Bridegroom*, 123.

(esp. by keeping his commandments, 14:15, 21, 23, 28; 15:12) and also to love each other (13:34; 15:12, 17).

Τόπος, μοναὶ, οἰκία: God Dwelling in Man and Man Dwelling in God

It is within this context of love that Jesus announces to the disciples that he is going to prepare a "place" (τόπος) for them in one of the many rooms/dwelling places (μοναὶ) in the Father's house (οἰκία) (14:2).[181] The reference to the τόπος in the Father's house possibly refers again to the Jewish tradition seeing in this expression a reference to the Temple.[182] The terminology also recalls Jesus' designation of the Temple as his "Father's house" in John 2:16. Since these are the only two places where the "Father's house" is mentioned in the Fourth Gospel, it is probable that Jesus is now announcing the imminent establishment of the "new Temple" that he foretold in chapter 2. The new eschatological Temple of Jesus' body, out of which flow the rivers of living water (cf. John 4:14; 7:38–39 above and 19:34 below), is therefore at the same time the "Father's house" into which the bridegroom-Messiah will bring his bride.[183] As Kerr points out, although a literal identification of Jesus' body with the "dwelling places" promised to the disciples seems rather bizarre, the text does indicate that the "Father's house" bears a degree of identification with the Messiah, for he promises: "If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and *receive you to Myself*; that where I am, there you may be also" (John 14:3).

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181 For studies on the "Father's house" and Temple connections in John 13–14, see Kerr, *The Temple of Jesus' Body*, 268–313; Coloe, *God Dwells With Us*, 157–178; McCaffrey, *The House with Many Rooms*.

182 In John 11:48, Caiaphas uses the word τόπος to refer to the Temple, and the LXX uses the same phrase (ἡτοίμασεν τὸν τόπον) to denote the preparing of a place for the Ark of the Covenant (1 Chr 15:1, 3; 2 Chr 3:1). Cf. Hahn, "Temple, Sign, and Sacrament," 128; McCaffrey, *The House with Many Rooms*, 185; Coloe, *God Dwells with Us,* 164–67 and above, p. 136 n. 81.

183 In arguing for the Temple symbolism of the "Father's house" of John 14:2–3, Kerr notes the common Passover setting of both pericopae (2:13; 13:1), as well as the mention of the related pilgrimage to the Jerusalem Temple (2:13; 11:55). Kerr also demonstrates how Jesus' washing the feet of his disciples may allude to the ritual washings that were required of priests as they approached the sanctuary (cf. Exod 30:17–21; 40:30–32; 1 Kgs 7:38; 2 Chr 4:6; Jub. 21:16; Josephus, *Ant*. 8.3.6 §87). Significant is his observation that some of Philo's texts see footwashing – of the priests *and* of the sacrificial animals – as a cleansing preparation before entering the Temple or offering sacrifice (*Quaest. Gen.* 4:5; *Quaest Exod.* 1:2; *De spec. leg.* 1:206–207). On this basis Kerr asks whether something similar could be the case in John 13: "By washing the disciples' feet, is Jesus preparing them for entry into the new Temple he is going to establish through his death, resurrection and ascension?" cf. Kerr, *The Temple of Jesus' Body*, 278–92.

The union of love between Christ and his disciples is underlined by the repeated use of μένω, expressing the Father dwelling in Jesus and Jesus in the Father (14:10–11, 20), Jesus dwelling with the disciples and the disciples abiding in Jesus (14:20, 25; 15:4–10),[184] and the Spirit dwelling with the disciples (14:17). In one of Jesus' strongest statements, he declares: "If anyone loves me, he will keep my word; and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home (μονή) with him (John 14:23). The idea of Jesus "staying" or "abiding" (μένω) with his disciples, introduced in an obscure dialogue at the beginning of Jesus' ministry (John 1:38–39), metaphorically illustrated by Jesus "staying" with the Samaritan community (4:40), sacramentally obtained by "eating Jesus' flesh and drinking his blood" (6:56) now finds its culmination in the analogy of the vine and branches (John 15:1–17) and with the idea of the Father and Son literally making their home in the believer through the presence of the Holy Spirit promised in the earlier discourses on living waters.

As Jesus previously declared to the Samaritan woman, the new place of worship and "Father's house" is not spatial (John 4:23). Referring back to its Davidic context, the term "house" carries a double connotation: it can mean either a Temple or a family. David wanted to build a "house" for God (the Temple), but God instead built a house for him (a dynasty or family, 2 Sam 7:5, 11; 1 Chron 17:1, 4, 10). This constitutes the background to the idea that the "Father's house" is not only located in Jesus but also in his community of disciples.[185] As Hahn writes, "the sense of the new Temple is being extended from Jesus' physical body to the community of God, that is, to God's 'household' or 'family.'"[186] Out of this comes a paradox: on the one hand the disciples can hope to find a τόπος in one of the μοναὶ the Father's οἰκία, yet at the same time Jesus and the Father will make their home within the believer. The many "dwelling places" or "rooms" (μοναὶ πολλαί) in the Father's house thus evoke both the rooms of the Temple and the family home where the community-bride can finally abide and "stay" (μένειν) with her bridegroom-Messiah. This is a surprising response to the unsuspecting first question of the disciples asking Jesus where he is "staying," and his invitation that they come and see (John 1:38–39).

184 Perhaps the analogy of the vine and branches to illustrate the union between Christ and the disciples also carries some nuptial allusion. Cf. Isa 5:1–7; Jer 2:21; Hos 10:1; Ps 128:3.

185 The idea of the community as Temple is known from the Qumran texts (1QS 9:5–7; 1QFlor 1:6; 1QS 8:9; 9:3; 4QFlor 1:6) and the Pauline corpus (1 Cor 3:16–17; 6:19; 2 Cor 6:16; Eph 2:21). Cf Kerr, *The Temple of Jesus' Body*, 54–57; 296–98 and below, p. 394.

186 Hahn, "Temple, Sign, and Sacrament." 128; cf. McCaffrey, *The House with Many Rooms*, 177–84; Coloe, *God Dwells With Us*, 160–62.

Yet before the disciples can find their definitive home in the Father's house they must undergo severe tribulations – and these too are described in nuptial terms. Jesus refers to his impending death as the birth pangs of a woman in labor whose "hour" has come. Just as the woman in travail has sorrow at her "hour," so the disciples will have sorrow now that the Bridegroom-Messiah's hour has come. But as the woman's anguish is transformed into joy when she delivers her new-born child, so will the disciples rejoice when they are reunited with Jesus (John 16:21–22). The imagery recalls the labor pains of Zion that the prophets said would precede the age of redemption.[187]

Fehribach suggests that another possible allusion to the messianic wedding in Jesus' farewell discourse may be seen in the prayer he utters shortly before his arrest, saying to his Father: "I made known to them thy name, and I will make it known" (John 17:26). This could be an allusion to Ps 45:17 ("I will make your name to be remembered in all generations"), which is an ode for a royal wedding in which the psalmist promises progeny and immortality to the royal bridegroom. A Johannine reference to this verse would imply that Jesus, as messianic bridegroom, promises that the name of his heavenly father would be eternally remembered through his own progeny.[188]

4.3.10 *The Hour has Come* (*John 19*)

Jesus' farewell discourse prepares the way for the "hour" of his crucifixion and death (John 17:1) that had been anticipated since the Wedding at Cana. The crucifixion narrative includes several points of interest that are worth examining: the Eden typology of the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus' Paschal sacrifice as a Messianic wedding, the Adam/Eve/birth allusions at the crucifixion, and the symbolism of the water and blood flowing out of Jesus' side.

4.3.10.1 In the Garden: Echoes of Eden?

The mention that Jesus was arrested and buried in a garden (κῆπος) (John 18:1, 26; 19:41) is also unique to John's Gospel. Some Church Fathers and modern scholars have maintained that this may be an allusion to the Garden

187 Isa 26:17–18; 66:7–10; Hos 13:13; Mic 4:9–10; 5:3; Rev 12:2–5. Cf. Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, 2:731; Feuillet, "Les épousailles du Messie – La mère de Jésus et l'Église dans le 4è Évangile," 377–91.

188 Cf. Fehribach, *The Women in the Life of the Bridegroom*, 122–23.

of Eden.[189] As Satan in the form of the serpent[190] caused Adam's fall in a garden, Satan in the form of Judas (cf. John 6:70–71; 13:27) causes Jesus' death by betraying him in a garden. Just as Adam, the archetypal king, was buried in the garden of Paradise according to some traditions (*Apoc. Mos*. 37:5; 40:2), so Jesus, the King of the Jews, is also buried in a garden. But Satan's plan backfires as Jesus' death turns into the source of new life. The evangelist would be suggesting in this way a reversal of the events that caused the original fall and a renewed opening of the Garden of Eden.[191]

4.3.10.2 Paschal Sacrifice and Messianic Wedding

We have mentioned Fehribach's portrayal of Jesus' death as a blood sacrifice establishing a patrilineal kinship group between him and his followers. The idea is in line with the relationship between blood sacrifices and patrilineal descent that was common in both the ancient Greco-Roman world and in Biblical tradition.[192] In light of the Johannine nuptial imagery seen throughout the Gospel, Jesus' death – his "hour" – would thus appear to constitute the consummation of the messianic wedding between him and his bride whereby she becomes, so to speak, his family.

Jesus' Death as Paschal Sacrifice

The predominance of Passover symbolism in the Fourth Gospel is well known. Whereas for the synoptics the Last Supper is a Passover meal and Jesus is crucified on the 15th of Nissan, for John, the Last Supper *precedes* the Passover and Jesus is crucified on Passover Eve, the 14th of Nissan (John 18:28; 19:14).[193]

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189 E.g. Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechesis* 13:32 (PG 33, 811A). Cf. Lightfoot, *St. John's Gospel: A Commentary*, 321–22; Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, 2:806; Nicolas Wyatt, "Supposing Him to Be the Gardener" (John 20,15): A Study of the Paradise Motif in John," *Zeitschrift für die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der Älteren Kirche* 81 (1990) 24–38; Hoskyns, *The Fourth Gospel*, 2:646; Moloney, *The Gospel of John*, 484, 513; Manns, *L'Évangile de Jean à la lumière du Judaïsme*, 401–29; Fehribach, *The Women in the Life of the Bridegroom*, 124–25.

190 Cf. Rev 12:9 for the identification of the ancient serpent with Satan in Johannine tradition.

191 Cf. Hoskyns in *JTS*, April 1920, 210–18, quoted in Lightfoot, *St. John's Gospel*, 322.

192 Fehribach (*The Women in the Life of the Bridegroom*, 116–21) relies on the study of Nancy Jay, "Sacrifice, Descent and the Patriarchs," *Vetus Testamentum* 38 (1988) 52–70, who cites the example of Jacob offering a sacrifice in Gen 31:44–54 to establish his kinship covenant with Laban.

193 On the difficulties in dating the Last Supper and the conflicting accounts of the synoptics and John, cf. Brown, *The Gospel According to John* 2:555–56.

The Fourth Gospel thus presents the death of Jesus as a paschal sacrifice. The motif was already announced in the Gospel's first chapter, where John the Baptist calls Jesus "the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (1:29, 36), and it is confirmed by some Paschal features that are associated with the moment of his death: First, Jesus is condemned to death at noon on the day before Passover (John 19:14), at the same time when the priests began to slay the paschal lambs in the Temple. Second, as hyssop was used to smear the lamb's blood on the doorposts of the Israelites in Egypt (Exod 12:22), a hyssop sponge is used to give Jesus wine while he is on the cross (John 19:29). Third, as no bone of the paschal lamb was broken (Exod 12:46), so none of Jesus' bones is broken (John 19:31).[194]

The Passion as Messianic Wedding?

Could the passion and death of Jesus be interpreted as a messianic wedding leading to the subsequent birth of the children of God as announced in John 1:12?[195] We have mentioned Jesus' promise to "prepare a place" for his disciples and the reference to the nuptial Psalm 45:17 in his priestly prayer. In addition, John Bergsma has proposed that several details of the crucifixion/resurrection narrative may hint at the idea of the Passion as Messianic Wedding.[196]

1) During his trial, Jesus wore a crown of thorns and a purple robe (19:2). Could this be an ironic reference to ancient wedding traditions whereby the bridegroom clothed himself with special garments and decked himself with a crown (cf. Isa 61:10; Cant 3:11)?[197]
2) Jesus was stripped naked before he was crucified (19:23), perhaps pointing to the total vulnerability of the Bridegroom-Messiah at the moment of his self-offering.

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194 Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, 1:62. On the time of Jesus' crucifixion, cf. *ibid*., 2:883. On the associations between Jesus' death and the Passover, cf. also Coloe, *God Dwells With Us*, 190–196.

195 On the marriage and family symbolism of the crucifixion in John cf. also Syreeni, "From the Bridegroom's Time to the Wedding of the Lamb," 357–363.

196 Lecture given by Dr. John Bergsma at Franciscan University of Steubenville, OH on July 30, 2009.

197 Cf. 2 Bar. 10:13; *m*. *Sotah* 9:14 and below, p. 248. *PRE* 16 notes that both a bridegroom and king are clothed with glory. Cf. Safrai, *The Jewish People in the First Century*, 758; Fehribach, *The Women in the Life of the Bridegroom*, 123; Zimmermann, "Nuptial Imagery in the Revelation of John," 154–56.

3) Jesus' words to his mother, "Woman, behold your son" (19:26) allude to a spiritual birth. (see below).
4) Jesus' words, "I thirst" (19:28) echo his previous discussion about thirst, living water and husbands in the dialogue with the Samaritan woman (4:13–15), the Bread of Life discourse (6:35), and the speech in the Temple during the Feast of Tabernacles (7:37). It may also allude to the OT betrothal-type scenes at the well, such as the scene where the servant of Abraham thirsted and was given to drink by Rebekah (Gen 24). Is the Bridegroom-Messiah now declaring his thirst to his bride?
5) Jesus is given sour wine while he is on the cross (19:29). The bitter drink stands in contrast with the "best wine" that he provided at Cana, indicating that his hour has finally come.[198] Jesus then provided the best wine for others; now he drinks the bitter cup of death for the sake of his bride.
6) Could Jesus' last words before dying, "it is finished" (τετέλεσται) be translated as "it is consummated" (19:30) and understood in a marital sense?
7) The blood and water coming out of Jesus' side (19:34) carries overtones of birth imagery (see below).
8) Nicodemus brings 100 pounds of myrrh and aloes to anoint the body of Jesus (19:39). These spices are always mentioned in a nuptial context in the OT (Ps 45:7; Prov 7:17; Cant 4:14).
9) Jesus is laid to rest in an empty, "virginal" tomb in a garden. The earth as place of generation and birth is likened to a womb in OT thought (cf. Ps 139:15).
10) The resurrection scene in John 20:1–18 reveals a correlation with Cant 3:1–4 (see below).

Some of these points, however, seem rather stretched, displaying more the traits of an allegorical interpretation than true exegesis. Personally I would judge Bergsma's proposed nuptial allusions as ranging between unlikely (2, 6, 9), possible (1, 4, 5), and plausible (3, 7, 8, 10).

4.3.10.3 New Adam, New Eve, New Birth?

Just before he dies, Jesus sees his mother and "the disciple whom he loved" standing by the cross. He tells her: "woman, behold your son!" and to him "behold your mother!" (John 19:26). The last time Jesus called his mother "woman" was at Cana, where they were portrayed as new Adam and Eve

198 Cana and the crucifixion scene are the only two places where wine is mentioned in the Fourth Gospel.

figures.[199] The same connection now returns at the scene of the crucifixion (the only other place where the mother of Jesus appears in the Fourth Gospel). In both scenes Jesus calls her "woman." Cana announced Jesus' "hour" and Calvary fulfills it. Cana was portrayed as the seventh day of a new creation, featuring Jesus and his mother as new Adam and Eve figures. Now, at Jesus' "hour" when he entrusts the beloved disciple to Mary as her son, it is as if the new Adam and new Eve bring forth their first spiritual fruit: the disciple as Mary's "son" is representative of the new messianic community.[200] Brown notes: "the Johannine picture of Jesus' mother becoming the mother of the beloved disciple seems to evoke the OT themes of Lady Zion's giving birth to a new people in the messianic age, and of Eve and her offspring."[201]

Ironic is Jesus' last plea for a drink when, on the brink of dying, he says "I thirst." As in his dialogue with the Samaritan woman, the one who is the source of the waters of eternal life (4:14; 7:38) is now asking again for a drink. One sees here a mirror of the previous dialogue, taken to a higher plane: Jesus asked the woman for a drink while claiming to be the one who could satiate her spiritual thirst by the gift of his "living water." Here, at the cross, Jesus again declares his thirst just before he "gave up his spirit" (παρέδωκεν τὸ πνεῦμα) – perhaps as the evocative and proleptic sign that the Spirit promised earlier is to be released now that his "hour" has come.[202] The full impartation of the Spirit, however, only comes after the resurrection in John 20:22.

4.3.10.4 Stream from Jesus' Side: Eden, the Rock, and Zion

Related to the idea of the crucifixion as birth is the description, unique to the Fourth Gospel, of the Roman soldier piercing Jesus' side with a spear immediately after his death, "and immediately blood and water came out" (John 19:34). Commentators have seen in this feature a rich symbolism pointing to the

199 On the literary relationship between Mary's role at the Wedding at Cana and at the crucifixion scene, cf. Serra, *Marie à Cana*, 103–142.

200 Feuillet ("Les épousailles du Messie," 547) sees three developments in the idea of the Passion as the creation of a new humanity: 1) the relationship between the "woman" of Cana and of Calvary and the woman of the *protoevangelium*; 2) the spiritual maternity of the mother of Jesus, the new Eve in John 19:25–27 (cf. pp. 550–53); 3) the "consummation" of the redemptive mystery and the gift of the Holy Spirit in 19:28–30.

201 Brown, *The Gospel According to John* 2:925–26; cf. also Fehribach, *The Women*, 127–131.

202 And so Brown (*The Gospel According to John* 2:931): "John seems to play upon the idea that Jesus handed over the (Holy) Spirit to those at the foot of the cross, in particular, to his mother who symbolizes the Church or new people of God and to the Beloved Disciple who symbolizes the Christian."

streams that flowed in the Garden of Eden, out of the rock in the desert, and out of Zion/the Temple.

Many Church Fathers related the outpouring of water and blood from Jesus' side with the Garden of Eden by means of a reference to Gen 2:21: As Eve was taken out of the side (πλευρά) of Adam, so the blood and water, representing the new Eve, the community of believers, flowed out of Christ's side (πλευρά).[203] If this ecclesiological interpretation has fallen in disfavor among some modern exegetes, others continue to see in the passion narrative the birth of the new family of God, whether this be in the newly formed filial relationship between the mother of Jesus and the beloved disciple (John 19:26–27), or in the emission of blood and water suggestive of natural birth and also of the new birth "of water and the Spirit" that Jesus announced to Nicodemus (cf. John 3:5).[204] Eve, called "woman" and "mother of all living" (Gen 2:23; 3:20), is associated with the mother of Jesus, called "woman" and made mother of the beloved disciple. At the same time, Eve is identified with the blood and water coming out of Jesus' πλευρά.[205] This would again render Jesus as an Adamic figure, out of whose side is taken his bride. In this light, the evangelist could well have intended to represent the passion and death of Christ as the culmination and consummation of his messianic marriage, followed by his giving birth to the "children of God" as announced in John 1:12.

Water from the Rock

Another possible background to the water and blood flowing out of the side of Jesus is the episode of the water gushing forth from the rock in the desert in

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203 Tertullian (*De Anima* 43), for example, wrote: "As Adam was a figure of Christ, Adam's sleep shadowed out the death of Christ, who was to sleep a mortal slumber, that from the wound inflicted in his side might in like manner (as Eve was formed) be typified the Church, the true Mother of the living." Cf. Chavasse, *The Bride of Christ*, 131. Other early witnesses to this interpretation include Apollinaris, Origen, Chrysostom, Cyril of Alexandria, Cyril of Jerusalem, Augustine. Cf. Hoskyns, *The Fourth Gospel*, 2:534–35 for full references; Cf. Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, 2:935, 949; Fehribach, *The Women in the Life*, 127–28; Coloe, *God Dwells with Us*, 207. Schnackenburg, *The Gospel According to John*, 3:289, 294 rejects this interpretation. The identification of the Church as new Eve is also established in Pauline theology, which attests that the tradition was already known at the time of the writing of the Fourth Gospel; cf. 2 Cor 11:2–3; Eph 5:31–32 and below, pp. 211 and 241f.

204 Fehribach, *The Women in the Life*, 127–28, nn. 42–43.

205 This double symbolism would explain why Mary was known as a symbol of both the Church and the New Eve in early Christianity. Cf. Justin, *Trypho* c. 5; Irenaeus *Adv. Haer.* III 22:4; Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, 1:108.

Num 20:11. While the biblical account only speaks of water coming out of the rock, the Targumic version adds that not only water but also *blood* flowed out of the rock:

> And Moses raised his hand and smote the rock with this staff twice: the first time blood dripped, but the second time much water came forth, and he gave the congregation and their livestock (water) to drink (Tg. Ps.-Jon. Num 20:11).[206]

It is not impossible that this Targumic tradition was already known orally in the first century, and that the evangelist had it in mind as he wrote the account of the crucifixion, in line with the Exodus/Moses motif that pervades the Fourth Gospel.

Streams from the Temple

Commentators agree that the flow from Jesus' side most strongly evokes the Temple and its sacrifices.[207] This is evidenced by the Mishnah, which also describes a flow of blood and water streaming from the Temple altar into the Kidron brook:

> And at the south-western corner there were two holes like two narrow nostrils by which the blood that was poured over the western base and the southern base used to run down and mingle in the water channel and flow out into the brook Kidron. (*m. Mid.* 3:2)[208]

Other scholars have seen a Johannine fulfillment of Zech 12:10 and 13:1 in the blood and water coming out of Jesus' side. John 19:37 cites Zech 12:10, seeing the crucified Jesus as the pierced one spoken of by Zechariah. Looking at the wider context of Zechariah's text, the water and blood flowing from Jesus' side could allude to Zechariah's promise that "a fountain shall be opened for the house of David and for the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness" (Zech 13:1). Brown notes that the themes of *pouring out*, of *spirit* (Zech 12:10), of a *fountain* opened for the *cleansing of sins* together evoke a fulfillment of the living water of the spirit that was announced in John 4:14 and

206 Cf. Coloe, *God Dwells With Us*, 206 n. 80.

207 On the relation between the water and blood flowing from Jesus' side and the Temple, cf. Coloe, *God Dwells With Us*, 206–208.

208 Cf. Coloe, *God Dwells with Us*, 207.

7:38–39.[209] The still wider context of Zechariah also features living waters flowing out of Jerusalem (Zech 14:8), which is a variation of Ezekiel's waters flowing out of the Temple (Ezek 47; also 36:25–27). Keeping in mind the fact that for John, Jesus replaces the Jerusalem Temple (cf. 2:21), and remembering that the rivers flowing out of Eden are associated with Zion and its streams in several scriptural and pseudepigraphical passages (cf. Isa 51:3; 58:11–12; Ps 36:9–10; 2 En. 8:5–6), Fehribach's conclusion seems quite plausible:

> Thus, the blood and water flowing from the side of the King of the Jews as he dies on the cross can easily be equated with these two streams in Eden/Zion that give life to the world. When one adds to this the notion that Zion is also described as the Bride of YHWH (Isa 50:1; 54:1–8), then the blood and water from the side of Jesus takes on marital/wedding overtones.[210]

Baptism and Eucharist?

Many commentators have also seen the flow from Jesus' side as representative of baptism and the Eucharist, which would naturally derive from the prior connection with the living waters flowing from the Temple and the Holy Spirit.[211] The sacramental meaning is not far fetched when one considers the intratextual witness: the only other mention of blood in the gospel is found in John 6:53–56, where Jesus emphasizes the need to "drink his blood." The water points not only to the previously announced "living waters" but also to the new birth of water and the spirit that Jesus discussed with Nicodemus. This sacramental symbolism would be the culmination of a number of typological layers cleverly thought out by the evangelist: from physical Temple to the body of

209 Brown, *The Gospel According to John* 2:955; Thurian, *Mary, Mother of All Christians*, 156–57.

210 Fehribach, *The Women in the Life of the Bridegroom*, 124. Kari Syreeni critiques Fehribach's position as an "exercise in overinterpretation," opining that "too many distinctive motifs that belong to different tradition-historical levels are coerced into a system." He is rightly skeptical about Fehribach's view that the messianic bridegroom becomes a bride by interpreting Jesus' death as a birth event, the mingling of water, blood and spirit as an act of conception, and the pierced body of Jesus as act of penetration. Yet Syreeni admits that "the apparently disturbing nuptial imagery cannot be removed completely." ("From the Bridegroom's Time to the Wedding of the Lamb: Nuptial Imagery in the Canonical Gospels and the Book of Revelation," in Nissinen & Uro, *Sacred Marriages*, 361–63).

211 Brown (*The Gospel According to John*, 2:950) suggests that the verse should be read in light of 1 John 5:6–8, which identifies water, blood and the Spirit as the three witnesses to Christ.

Jesus to the community of believers in whom dwells the Holy Spirit, received by the sacraments of baptism and the Eucharist.[212]

4.3.11 *The Beloved in the Garden* (*John 20:1–18*)

A final nuptial passage attesting to Jesus' role as Bridegroom-Messiah in the Fourth Gospel has been identified by a number of scholars in Jesus' resurrection appearance to Mary Magdalene (John 20:1, 11–18).[213] Curious elements in the text have traditionally puzzled commentators, such as the repetition of Mary's "turning" (John 20:14, 16) and Jesus' command not to hold him (20:17). These odd bits seem to find their rationale when the passage is read in light of Cant 3:1–4.

The narrative tells us the following: Mary Magdalene arrives alone at Jesus' tomb early on the first day of the week, "while it was still dark" to find that the tomb is empty (John 20:1). After an interlude which focuses on Peter and John's arrival at the tomb (John 20:2–10), the narrative returns to Mary in v. 11: she is standing outside the tomb weeping, then she stoops down to look inside the tomb. Mary sees two angels sitting where the body of Jesus had lain; they ask her why she is weeping. She replies: "Because they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid Him" (John 20:13). Suddenly, Mary "turned around (ἐστράφη) and saw Jesus standing there" (John 20:14). At first she does not recognize him and supposes him to be "the gardener" (John 20:15). When Jesus identifies himself, calling her by name, "she turned (στραφεῖσα) and said to Him, 'Rabboni!'" (John 20:16). Jesus then tells Mary: "do not hold me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father, but go to My brethren and say to them, 'I am ascending to My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God'" (John 20:17).

There are several parallels between this text and Cant 3:1–4. Just as Mary arrives at the tomb at night, while it is still dark, the Canticle describes the Shulamite rising by night, wandering alone throughout the city to search for the one she loves who has disappeared. Mary stands outside the tomb

212 Hahn's summary is fitting: "Jesus is the New Temple from which flows the bloody stream of sacrifice, dying as the true Passover lamb to fulfill that great feast, as part of the great 'sign' of his death and resurrection. And now, at what may be considered the heart or climax of Jesus' final 'sign,' there flows forth water and blood, the river of the Spirit, baptism and Eucharist" ("Temple, Sign, and Sacrament," 135–36).

213 On the relationship between this text and the Song of Songs, cf. Cambe, "L'influence du Cantique," 17–19; Winsor, *A King is Bound in the Tresses*, 34–44; Carr, *The Erotic World*, 163–67; Fehribach, *The Women in the Life of the Bridegroom*, 143–67; McWhirter, *The Bridegroom Messiah*, 88–105.

weeping and looking inside the tomb for her beloved; in Cant 3:2 the woman declares: "I will rise now and go about the city . . . I will seek him whom my soul loves." Both narratives have the woman standing/rising in the search for her beloved. Mary's encounter with the angels and her reply to them, "I do not know where they have laid Him," seems to echo the Shulamite's complaint: "I sought him, but I did not find him" as she encounters the city's watchmen and asks them whether they have seen her beloved (Cant 3:2–3). When Mary sees Jesus and thinks he is the gardener, this reminds the reader that the site of the crucifixion and Jesus' tomb is located in a garden (κῆπος, cf. John 19:41), a feature unique to the Fourth Gospel. This may allude to the garden setting of the Song, often used as a euphemism for the Shulamite.[214] When Jesus identifies himself to her, and she exclaims 'Rabboni!', this also seems to be a pictorial representation of Cant 3:4: "Scarcely had I passed by them, when I found the one I love." The fact that Mary recognizes Jesus at the sound of his voice when he calls her name may also allude to the voice of the beloved (קוֹל דּוֹדִי, Cant 2:8; 5:2) in the Canticle which so enthralls the Shulamite. In Cant 5:6 his voice causes a deep emotional reaction within her: "My heart leaped up ('my soul came out') when he spoke" (נַפְשִׁי יָצְאָה בְדַבְּרוֹ). Also, the odd repetition of Mary's turning (στρέφω) in John 20:14 and 20:16 may be explained in light of the related verbs in the Canticle meaning either "turning around" or "turning back":

Cant 2:17	סֹב דּוֹדִי / ἀπόστρεψον . . . ἀδελφιδέ μου
Cant 3:2	אֲסוֹבְבָה בָעִיר / κυκλώσω ἐν τῇ πόλει
Cant 7:1	שׁוּבִי שׁוּבִי הַשּׁוּלַמִּית שׁוּבִי שׁוּבִי וְנֶחֱזֶה־בָּךְ / ἐπίστρεφε ἐπίστρεφε ἡ Σουλαμῖτις ἐπίστρεφε ἐπίστρεφε καὶ ὀψόμεθα ἐν σοί[215]

Jesus' command to Mary "do not hold me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father" (John 20:17) is another anomaly given that there is no prior indication that she is holding him. The verse is enlightened by Cant 3:4:

214 There are nine occurrences of גַּן/κῆπος and one occurrence of פַּרְדֵּס/ παράδεισος in Cant. 4:12–13, 15–16; 5:1; 6:2, 11; 8:13. In Cant 8:13, words are spoken to an unknown person in the garden: הַיּוֹשֶׁבֶת בַּגַּנִּים חֲבֵרִים מַקְשִׁיבִים לְקוֹלֵךְ הַשְׁמִיעִנִי / ὁ καθήμενος ἐν κήποις ἑταῖροι προσέχοντες τῇ φωνῇ σου ἀκούτισόν με (Cant 8:13). The verse is ambiguous because the Hebrew speaks of a woman sitting in the gardens while the LXX has a male. Cambe and Winsor have suggested that the evangelist might be alluding to the person in the garden as being either Jesus or Mary, while the companions who are listening to his/her voice might be the disciples to whom the word of the resurrection was announced by Mary.

215 Winsor also uses Cant 7:11 and 6:1 as examples, though the connotation of "turning" here is somewhat weaker.

"I held him and would not let him go, until I had brought him to the house of my mother, and into the chamber of her who conceived me." The parallel is interesting not only because of the woman holding her beloved and not letting him go, but also because of the father/mother context. While the Shulamite ardently desires to bring her lover into the "house of her mother," the Gospel reverses these words and has Jesus declare to Mary that he is ascending "to My Father and your (pl.) Father, and to My God and your (pl.) God." With this statement, Jesus' Father and God becomes also the Father and God of Mary and the disciples. It is for all intents and purposes a familial adoption of Jesus' friends into "God's home." This verse is one of those proposed by Fehribach pointing to the establishment of a patrilineal descent group by means of Jesus' paschal sacrifice. For the first time in the Fourth Gospel, Jesus calls his disciples "brothers," and announces that what God the Father was always to him, He is now to his disciples. This indicates that Jesus' death and resurrection

> enabled the disciples to become 'brothers' of Jesus, just as Jacob's blood sacrifice reclassified Laban as a 'brother' to Jacob. Jesus' words, 'my Father and your Father,' indicate that Jesus' fraternal relationship with his disciples is based on a common heavenly Father, a common patrilineal descent established through his blood sacrifice.[216]

Receiving the Holy Spirit: A New Creation

On the evening of the same day – resurrection Sunday (John 20:19), Jesus breathes on his disciples, imparting the Holy Spirit to them (20:22). The Spirit had accompanied Jesus since the beginning of his ministry (John 1:32–33). Identified with Jesus' "living water" (7:39), it was announced as an essential requirement for entering the kingdom of God (3:5–6) and for true worship (4:23–24). Jesus had repeatedly promised its future coming and dwelling in the disciples (John 14:17, 26; 15:26; 16:13). As Jesus died on the cross, he "gave up the spirit" (παρέδωκεν τὸ πνεῦμα). Now, after the resurrection, he imparts the Spirit to the apostles as promised by breathing on them (ἐνεφύσησεν). This verb ἐμφυσάω – a *hapax* in the NT – is also rare in the OT. Significantly, it is used in Gen 2:7 to describe God imparting the breath of life to Adam. The author of the Wisdom of Solomon uses the same verb to describe the creation of man, whom God inspired with an active soul and "breathed into him a living spirit" (ἐμφυσήσαντα πνεῦμα ζωτικόν, Wis 15:11). The word is also used to describe Elijah's "breathing" on the dead son of the widow which brings him back to life (1 Kgs 17:21), and the breath of the spirit bringing the dry bones back

216 Fehribach, *The Women in the Life of the Bridegroom*, 121.

to life in Ezek 37:9. John's use of ἐμφυσάω likely continues the theme of the new creation that was initiated in the Gospel's prologue. Jesus breathing on the apostles and imparting the promised Spirit to them signifies that he is completing in them the new creation and new birth that he announced earlier (John 3:3–5, 16:21). But as Feuillet notes, unlike the first creation where Adam was but a passive instrument in the hands of the Creator, here the new Adam is the creator of the "new Eve" which came out of him, the community of believers.[217] We must keep in mind that this day of the "new creation" is precisely the "third day" on which Jesus raises the new Temple (of His Body) as he announced in John 2:19–21.

4.3.12 *Summary: Nuptial Imagery in the Gospel of John*

For John, Jesus is the Bridegroom-King-Messiah. Although this is announced only once explicitly (3:29), the nuptial theme consistently returns throughout the Gospel by means of hints, allusions, and irony: John the Baptist's declaration about Jesus' sandals pointing to the law of the levirate, Jesus' hidden role as bridegroom providing the best wine at Cana, the betrothal-type scene with the Samaritan woman modeled on the conversation between Jacob and Rachel, the anointing of Jesus' feet by Mary of Bethany evoking Cant 1:12, his promise at the Last Supper to prepare a place for his disciples in his Father's house, the comparison of his death to a woman's labor pains, the allusions to birth at the cross as Jesus entrusts the beloved disciple to Mary as her son and water and blood pour out of his side, and the resurrection appearance to Mary Magdalene evoking Cant 3:1–2 – all these point to a sustained use of nuptial imagery throughout the Gospel, referring to our key moments in salvation history in the following ways:

4.3.12.1 New Creation/Eden; New Adam and Eve

John interweaves his nuptial symbolism with several allusions to creation, Eden, and Adam and Eve. The language of the prologue and the sequence of seven days leading to Cana indicates that Jesus is inaugurating a new creation and taking on the role of a new Adam. At Cana, Jesus' mother, called "woman," takes on the role of a new Eve. Jesus' arrest and burial in a garden evokes the Garden of Eden, where by his obedient death on a "tree" he reverses the disobedience of the first Adam. The river of living water coming out of Jesus (4:14; 7:38; 19:34), by alluding to the water flowing out of Ezekiel's Temple, indirectly recalls the rivers of Eden, and his imparting of the Holy Spirit on the

217 Cf. Feuillet, "Les épousailles du Messie – La mère de Jésus et l'Église dans le 4è Évangile," 386. Compare *Jos. Asen.* 19:10–11; Seaich, *A Great Mystery*, 174–75 and below, p. 273 n. 17.

apostles by blowing on them alludes to the creation of the first Adam and completes the work of the new creation.

4.3.12.2 Sinai and Paschal Mystery

John's nuptial symbolism is also intrinsically related to Sinai and Exodus typology: Jesus' revelation of the divine glory at Cana and at his "hour" recalls the divine glory revealed at Sinai (1:14; 17:1–5; cf. Exod 24:16–17); his role as sacrificial lamb of God is modeled on the paschal lamb (1:29; cf. Exod 12); the sequence of days leading to Cana, the allusion to Jacob's ladder, Mary's words to the servants, and the symbolism of wine at Cana all point to the Sinai theophany (2:1–11; Exod 19–24). Jesus' lifting up is compared to the lifting up of the brazen serpent in the desert (3:14; cf. Num 21); the reference to the manna in the Bread of Life discourse (6:16–21; cf. Exod 16), the allusions to the water from the rock (4:14; 7:38; cf. Exod 17; Num 20), and Jesus' role as "the prophet" (6:14; 7:40) all point to a close connection between John's narrative and the Exodus.[218]

4.3.12.3 New Temple

Jesus' role as new Temple pervades the Fourth Gospel. The prologue announces that he "tabernacled" among us (1:14), and the declaration that his body will be a new Temple (2:21) sets the tone for the rest of the book. The Temple theme is developed in the dialogue with the Samaritan woman about the coming new form of worship, and the recurring theme of the living waters recalling the river flowing out of Ezekiel's Temple (Ezek 47:1–12). At the Last Supper, the discussion on preparing a "place" in the "Father's house" not only uses nuptial/familial language but also Temple allusions, implying that the new Temple will be extended from Jesus' own body to the community of believers. This is prefigured by the role of the women in John (Mary the mother of Jesus, the Samaritan woman, Mary of Bethany and Mary Magdalene) who represent the ecclesial community. The link between Jesus as Temple and the disciples as Temple is the gift of the Spirit, obtained through washing in the "living water" of baptism (3:5), and the Eucharistic "eating his flesh and drinking his blood" (6:53–58, 63).

4.3.12.4 Realized Eschatology

Characteristic of the Fourth Gospel is its (partly) realized eschatology: in contrast to the synoptics, which acknowledge the bridegroom's presence during his ministry on earth but also anticipate his relative absence (cf. Matt 9:15) until his eschatological second coming (25:1–13), John has a more pronounced

218 Cf. Glasson, *Moses in the Fourth Gospel*.

emphasis on the continued presence of the Bridegroom-Messiah, perpetuated *now* in the community of disciples. Cana is already an anticipation of the great eschatological wedding feast; and Jesus told the Samaritan woman that "the hour is coming and *now is* when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth" (John 4:23).

Though there is an awareness of the eschatological resurrection in John, the emphasis keeps returning to the immediate life-giving presence of the bridegroom (cf. John 11:24–26). Even when Jesus speaks at length about his departure, he promises his disciples that he will not leave them orphans, but will come and make his home in them (14:23) through the presence of the Holy Spirit (14:26), mediated by the water and blood of baptism and the Eucharist (19:34; cf. 1 John 5:6–8).

The rich sacramental imagery of the Fourth Gospel thus gives us the following picture: Jewish types (Sinai, water of purification, the Temple, betrothal of Jacob & Rachel, the manna) point to Jesus the Bridegroom (Cana as new Sinai, wine of Cana revealing Jesus' glory, Jesus as new Temple, "betrothal" of Jesus & Samaritan Woman, the Bread of Life). This fulfilment in Christ is actualized and re-lived in the community of believers who are the bride (3:29) and extension of the new Temple on account of the Father's love (14:23). They take on this role via Jesus' death when he "gives up the spirit" and the flow of blood and water, representing baptism and the Eucharist, comes out of him at his death, and when he imparts the Holy Spirit to them after the resurrection. As Coloe writes:

> The blood and water is the link between the events narrated and the community of believers of later generations . . . When Jesus is no longer a physical presence with them, the community can still be drawn into his filial relationship with God and participate in the sacrificial gift of his life in their sacraments of baptism and Eucharist.[219]

4.4 The First Epistle to the Corinthians: The Body as Temple

4.4.1 *Introduction*

4.4.1.1 St. Paul

John not only portrays Jesus as Bridegroom-Messiah, new Temple, and new dwelling place of the *Shekhinah*; he also subtly connects these roles to the community of believers through his mystical sacramental theology. Nevertheless,

219 Coloe, *God Dwells with Us*, 200.

the main focus of John's nuptial and Temple typology remains Christological.[220] The matter is treated much differently by Paul, who is especially fond of extending nuptial and Temple typology to the Church, represented as bride, Temple, and body of Christ. This theme is also extended to the individual Christian, called a "temple of Holy Spirit" in whom dwells the divinity.[221] In commenting on John's account of the cleansing of the Temple, Raymond Brown distinguishes three different strains of early Christian thought about the spiritual Temple:[222]

(a) the Christian Temple or house of God is the *Church* (Eph 2:19–21, 1 Pet 2:5, 4:17);
(b) the Temple is the *individual Christian* (1 Cor 3:16, 6:19);
(c) the Temple is *in heaven* – the earthly Temple and Jerusalem are only copies of the heavenly (Heb 9:11–12, Rev 11:19, 2 Bar. 4:5).

These are precisely the three levels of meaning that we will continue to explore as related to the New Testament's nuptial symbolism. Paul is the champion of the first two, while the third dimension is especially found in the Apocalypse. Three Pauline epistles are particularly relevant to our study because of their treatment of nuptial imagery and its relation to Adam, Sinai, and Temple typology: 1 and 2 Corinthians, and the Epistle to the Ephesians. These reveal a clear confluence of the nuptial/temple motifs with the mystical marriage between Christ and the Church taking place in the Temple of the Holy Spirit – the believer. At the same time, these motifs are related to the Adam-Eve union and to Sinai and Exodus typology. In this section we will study how nuptial symbolism is applied to the Church and to the Christian, investigating the use of Temple symbolism as expressing the union between Christ and his bride.

4.4.1.2 1 Corinthians

In the First Epistle to the Corinthians, Paul makes no direct allusion to an allegorical or mystical marriage, but he has plenty to say about earthly marriage and sexuality, about the Church and believer as Temple of the Holy Spirit

220 The identification of Jesus with the Temple is further supported by other passages such as Col 2:9, which describes Christ as the place of the fullness of God's dwelling. See also the Epistle to the Hebrews and its related treatment of Christ as both high priest and sacrifice of the heavenly liturgy (Heb 2:17; 4:14–16; 5:1–11; 7:11–28; 8:1–6; 9:1–28; 10:1–22).

221 Cf. John 14:23.

222 Brown, *The Gospel According to John* 1:124.

(1 Cor 3:16–17; 6:19–20),[223] and about the Church as Body of Christ (6:15–17; 10:17; 11:29; 12:12–26). 1 Corinthians has been criticized as being "poor in doctrinal content" and as "that unit among the major Pauline letters which yields the very least for our understanding of the Pauline faith."[224] A superficial scanning of the epistle's content may initially seem to confirm the impression that Paul wrote "an occasional, *ad hoc*, response to the situation that had developed in the Corinthian church"[225] to address some of their particular problems and questions, such as disunity and strife (1:10–17, 3:1–4, 6:1–11, 11:18–19), doubts concerning Paul's authority (4:1–21, 9:1–27), sexual immorality (5:1–13, 6:12–20), marriage and consecrated virginity (7:1–40), food sacrificed to idols and idolatry (8:1–13, 10:14–33), customs and conduct in Christian worship, particularly at the Lord's Supper (11:1–34), and spiritual gifts (12:1–31; 14:1–40). The primary concern for ethics would be apparently interspersed with some doctrinal, philosophical, or theological remarks for the sake of strengthening the moral exhortations, including an excursus on wisdom (1:18–2:16), agricultural and architectural metaphors for the Church (3:5–17), the necessity and importance of love (13:1–13) and the resurrection of believers (15:1–58).

A closer examination of the text, however, reveals that Paul is in fact using sustained Temple imagery and typology throughout the epistle in addressing the different issues of the Corinthian community. When viewed in light of this Temple typology applied to the believer (or *mystagogy*), Paul's practical directives to the Corinthians turn out to be much more that mere casuistic and occasional moral exhortations. They are, rather, a description of the sanctified life of love that ought to flow from the believer's consecrated nature as Temple of the Holy Spirit. 1 Corinthians is rich in a Temple mystagogy that describes the intimate indwelling of the deity within the Corinthian believers and is often associated with nuptial/sexual themes: through baptism, the body is consecrated as temple of the Holy Spirit, and the believer experiences a personal union with God comparable to the union that took place between God and Israel in the sanctuary of the physical Temple. However, this anthropic Temple can become desecrated through sexual immorality, and Paul quotes the "one-flesh" union between Adam and Eve of Gen 2:24 to make his point (1 Cor 6:16). He also argues that the man-woman hierarchy derives from the created order (Gen 1–2; 1 Cor 11:3–16), recalling the tradition of the first

223 On the Church and believer as Temple, see Corriveau, "Temple, Holiness, and the Liturgy of Life in Corinthians."

224 Walter Bauer, *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity*, 219; quoted in Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians*, 9.

225 Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 4.

androgynous man out of whom God created the female by taking a rib from his body. For Paul, not only the Eucharist (11:23–32) but also the community of disciples is the Body of Christ who is "joined" to him (12:12–31). Moreover, Christ's identity as the New Adam (15:22, 45–49) (and the derivative idea of the Church as New Eve) reveals an additional link between Temple symbolism and the Adam/Eve/Eden narrative, not unlike a similar motif that was observed in the Fourth Gospel.

4.4.2 *Wisdom and Temple Building* (*1 Cor 1:10–3:23*)

Paul begins by expressing his concern about schisms in the Corinthian church that contradict the unity signified by the common baptism of all believers (1:10–17). This concern for unity is interrupted by a long excursus on the wisdom and folly of God and of men in 1:18–2:16, until the theme of unity is resumed in 3:1–4. In order to drive home the importance of unity, Paul uses two metaphors to describe the Corinthian church: it is "God's field" in which different workers plant and water, but where God alone gives the increase, and "God's building" (θεοῦ οἰκοδομή) in the process of being constructed (1 Cor 3:9).[226] The foundation of this building is Jesus Christ, even though Paul "as a wise master builder" (σοφὸς ἀρχιτέκτων) has laid its foundation. Given the preceding excursus on wisdom, and the Temple metaphor that immediately follows in verses 16–17, it is quite possible that this mention of the σοφὸς ἀρχιτέκτων is an allusion to Solomon, the builder of the Temple who was so reputed for his wisdom. Paul goes on to describe the building materials of this spiritual structure: gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, and straw (3:12). Fee notes how the first three are frequently mentioned in the OT as the building materials of the Temple.[227] Perhaps the immediate context of burning here (where each one's work "will be revealed by fire," 3:13) also implies an allusion to the latter three materials as those used to feed the fire on the altar of sacrifices. In verse 16, Paul specifies that the building being erected is indeed God's Temple: "Do you not know that you are the Temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?" (ναὸς θεοῦ ἐστε καὶ τὸ πνεῦμα τοῦ θεοῦ οἰκεῖ ἐν ὑμῖν).[228] Paul is using Temple mystagogy to describe the intimate indwelling of the deity within the Corinthian

226 Conzelmann (75) shows that the mixing of these two metaphors is traditional in the OT, in Judaism, in Hellenism and in Gnosticism; Eg. Jer 1:10; Philo, *De Cherub*. 100–112.

227 Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 140–41. Cf. Hag 2:8; 1 Chr 22:14, 16; 29:2; 2 Chr 3:6.

228 It is significant that Paul is using here ναός, the word for the actual sanctuary, as opposed to the entire Temple structure (ἱερόν). Cf. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 146.

church: through baptism (1:14–17; 6:11), they have received the Spirit of divine wisdom to build a holy Temple – themselves: "For the Temple of God is holy, which Temple you are" (ὁ γὰρ ναὸς τοῦ θεοῦ ἅγιός ἐστιν, οἵτινές ἐστε ὑμεῖς) (3:17). The use of the plural indicates that the Temple of God is the community, and it is through the community that the Spirit is communicated to individuals.[229] It is thus within the church that the Corinthians can now experience a personal union with God comparable to the union that took place between God and his people in the sanctuary of the physical Temple. As God is ἅγιος, so is His Temple – His people – also ἅγιος, consecrated and set apart for Him and for His purposes. The Corinthians are in a sense already sanctified "in Christ;" yet in another they are still called to become saints in practice (ἡγιασμένοις ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ, κλητοῖς ἁγίοις) (1:2). But through their factions they are defiling their own Temple, undermining their own identity in Christ and corrupting the very mystery they are celebrating. The dire consequences of such behavior are evident: If one defiles or corrupts (φθείρει) the Temple and dwelling of God, God will also destroy (φθείρει) him.

4.4.3 *Πορνεία as Defilement of the Anthropic Temple* (*1 Cor 5–9*)

In chapter 5, Paul condemns the sexual misconduct that is plaguing the church in Corinth with a brief mystagogical allusion to Passover and to the cleansing of leaven, which is equated with sin. After expressing his shock at a case of litigation in the church (6:1–11), he returns to his concern for bodily purity and explains more thoroughly the gravity of sexual immorality and the reasons why it defiles the Temple of the Holy Spirit. With the words "but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God" (v. 11), Paul is again reminding the Corinthians that the washing of their common baptism is the foundation of their unity, sanctification and consecration to God in the Church.[230] When he states that "the body is not for πορνεία but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body" (v. 13), he comes close to alluding to the marriage between Christ and the Church: The

229 Cf. Corriveau, "Temple, Holiness, and the Liturgy of Life in Corinthians," 157–59. Gärtner (*The Temple and the Community in Qumran and the New Testament*, 56–60) shows four points of contact between this passage and the Temple symbolism of the Qumran community: (a) identification of the Temple of God' with the community; (b) the Spirit of God 'dwells' in the congregation; (c) the Temple of God is holy; (d) this requires the purity of the members.

230 For discussions on the attribution of ἀπελούσασθε to baptism, see Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 246–47; Orr and Walther, *1 Corinthians*, 199; Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians*, 107.

body of the baptized believer, consecrated, sanctified and set apart for God, can no longer be joined in passing and illicit "one-flesh" unions with women, since this body is now consecrated for a holy union with the deity: it is "for the Lord, and the Lord for the body." If Paul will formulate a positive description of the love between Christ and the Church as model and blueprint of the ideal "one-flesh" union between husband and wife in Ephesians, here he is compelled to deal with the opposite, negative example, and he must forcibly tell the Corinthians what *not* to do: fornication is not only a sexual sin, but also a desecration of their own bodily temple and an act liable to damage and even destroy their union with Christ, of which they are the members:

> 15 Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a harlot? Certainly not! 16 Or do you not know that he who is joined to a harlot is one body with her? For "the two," He says, "shall become one flesh." 17 But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him. 18 Flee sexual immorality. Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body. 19 Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? 20 For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's. (1 Cor 6:15–20)

Although this passage is closely related to 3:16–17, it goes beyond it by specifying that not only the community is a Temple of the Holy Spirit but also the believer's *body*.[231] Because of the body's sanctity, Paul takes pains to explain the serious implications of sexual immorality. The problem of πορνεία was a widespread one in Corinth, a city renowned for its sexual vice and for the cultic prostitution that took place in its pagan temples.[232] The passage highlights how the "one flesh" union affects the bodily Temple of the Holy Spirit, which is also a member of Christ. By an interesting twist, Paul quotes the one-flesh union of Gen 2:24 not as a metaphor for Christ and the Church (as in Ephesians), but to describe the contemptible union of a Christian with a prostitute. This

231 As Corriveau notes: "What is important here is the application of the identity of the Church as Temple to the body of the individual member of the Church. The message is that we cannot separate the community and its members." ("Temple, Holiness, and the Liturgy of Life," 162).

232 On the reputation of Corinth, see Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 2–3; Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians*, 11–12.

sin is graver than all others because it constitutes an offense against one's own body, the Temple of the Holy Spirit, and against the members of Christ that are "joined to the Lord" and "one spirit with him" in a covenantal relation of love and loyalty that was sealed at baptism. For this reason, Paul is much harsher against those believers who engage in πορνεία than those "of this world" who are not of the household of faith and whose bodies are not Temples of the Holy Spirit (5:9–13).

But what precisely is wrong with union with a prostitute? It is obviously not the physical, sexual act in itself that defiles the spiritual Temple and harms the union with Christ, since this union is permitted and even encouraged between husband and wife in the very next chapter (and later exalted in Ephesians as a sign of the union between Christ and the Church). In sexual intercourse two bodies become one; being joined to a prostitute, therefore, means to become a "member" of her body (6:15) – the body of a person who is not a member of Christ and therefore not destined for resurrection (cf. 6:14). The Christian is קָדוֹשׁ/ἅγιος, sanctified and set apart for God's service. The harlot, on the other hand, is a קְדֵשָׁה, not consecrated to God but rather "consecrated" to her sinful trade which is in open contradiction with the divine purpose of sexuality. Paul's discussion assumes Jesus' teachings on the permanence of marriage, and the passage becomes clearer within the context of the wider NT tradition on this topic. Both Jesus in the synoptics and Paul in Ephesians refer to Gen 2:24 and to Adam and Eve's nuptial union as the standard and prototype of the "one flesh" union between man and woman, as it was "in the beginning." In Matthew 19:4–5,[233] Jesus refers to the ancient tradition that God originally made אדם an androgynous being, "male and female" (cf. Gen 1:27; 5:2).[234] By taking Eve out of Adam, God made two complementary persons and left in them the insatiable desire to return to their primeval unity and wholeness and again be joined together as "one flesh." This original unity, separation, and longing to return to one-flesh unity forms the ground for Jesus' radically new teaching on marriage: "So then," he declares – since God made them "male and female," since woman was "taken out of man" and is "bone of his bones

233 See the discussion on Matt 19:3–12 above, p. 113.

234 See above (p. 105) for Philo's treatment of the first man as bisexual/androgynous. For the rabbinic background, see *b. Berakhot* 61a; *b. Ketubot* 8a; *b. Yebam.* 63a; *b. Erub.* 18a; *GenR* 8a, 17; *LevR* 14 (114a); *Midr. Ps.* 139:5 (246b, 265); *Meg.* 9a, and Ginzberg, *Legends of the Jews*, I:64–71; V:88–89 for a summary of these texts. The original unity of man and woman is also reflected in Gnostic writings (e.g. Gos. Philip 68 (76); 70 (86)). Cf. Batey, *New Testament Nuptial Imagery*, 32–33; Carl H. Kraeling, *Anthropos and Son of Man*, 1927; Barth, *Ephesians*, 725–26; Lincoln, "The Use of the OT in Ephesians."

and flesh of his flesh" and since a man "shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife" – on this basis, when they return together to their primal unity, "they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate" (Matt 19:6). In this light the problem with union with a prostitute becomes obvious: the one-flesh union, far from expressing the sacred, permanent bond of body and soul that sexual union is meant to represent, becomes degraded to a contract of convenience where the body is used as an object of consummation, temporarily "purchased" for the man's pleasure, and "disposed of" after use. In Ephesians, the sanctity and permanence of human marriage is emphasized even more strongly because it is modeled on and derived from the covenantal, faithful and enduring marriage between God and his people, where the bridegroom bestows קדושה upon the bride and consecrates her to himself in a permanent bond of love.[235] It is thus the innate contradiction of becoming "one flesh" with a prostitute without becoming "one spirit" with her by an enduring covenantal bond that constitutes the offense against the Temple of the Holy Spirit, whereby the very nature of the one-flesh union as a witness to God's faithful love is distorted and contradicted.

Returning to our passage in 1 Corinthians, Paul concludes his argument against πορνεία by going back to the analogy of the body as Temple of the

235 Meeks proposes that "the unification of opposites and especially the opposite sexes, served in early Christianity as a prime symbol of salvation," and that it was primarily in the baptismal ritual that the "new genus of mankind" or "restored original mankind" comes into being, where there is "neither male nor female" and all become one in Christ ("The Image of the Androgyne: Some Uses of a Symbol in Earliest Christianity," 166, 180–81). Meeks notes that the "neither male nor female" of Gal 3:28 is an allusion to Gen 1:27, implying that the original separation of male and female at creation is overcome in baptism through their reunification: "somehow the act of Christian initiation reverses the fateful division of Genesis 2:21–22. Where the image of God is restored, there, it seems, man is no longer divided-not even by the most fundamental division of all, male and female. The baptismal reunification formula thus belongs to the familiar Urzeit-Endeit pattern, and it presupposes an interpretation of the creation story in which the divine image after which Adam was modeled was masculofeminine" (p. 185). In my opinion, if speaking of a "myth of reunification" is certainly true of the later Gnostic texts (i.e. the "mystery of the bridal chamber" in the Gospels of Thomas and Philip; cf. Meeks, pp. 189–96), to speak of such a myth in the Pauline writings is perhaps an overstatement. While a "baptismal reunification of opposites" is certainly visible in Eph 5:22–33, it "has not produced any radical reassessment of the social roles of men and women in the congregation," who remain independent beings, albeit endowed with a new equal dignity in Christ, yet still subject to the social norms, limitations and divisions of their times – as Meeks himself acknowledges (pp. 205–6).

Holy Spirit that he employed in chapter 3. Illicit sexual union defiles the holy Temple consecrated to God, which was "bought at a price" (6:20; cf. Eph 5:2, 25) by Christ's death and should signify and represent the "sacred space" where God meets man and enters into communion with him. Paul is probably evoking here the concept of *tum'at mikdash* whereby the Temple becomes defiled because of Israel's sins.[236] The Temple, as God's house, is the place where the covenant between God and His people is enacted, maintained, and perpetuated. Any breach in the covenant, therefore, has negative ramifications for the Temple. "When sin taints the covenant, its symbol in the realm of space, the Temple, becomes tainted as well."[237] Likewise, the sin of Christians violates the covenant with Christ and taints the bodily Temple of the Holy Spirit. The passage fittingly concludes with an exhortation to the Corinthians to "glorify God" in body and spirit through sanctified behavior that is fitting to their new identity as consecrated sanctuaries of God's presence, since their body and spirit now entirely belong to him (v. 20).

The concerns about the effects of πορνεία on the Temple of the Holy Spirit are followed by a more systematic and positive exposition of the principles of marriage in chapter 7. Worthy of note here are the instructions regarding marriages between a believer and an unbeliever. Paul encourages the Christian spouse to remain with the non-Christian, "for the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband; otherwise your children would be unclean, but now they are holy" (1 Cor 7:14). He is teaching here the remarkable idea that the faith of the believing party confers sanctity upon the other and upon their children through the union of marriage.[238]

Further examples of Paul's Temple mystagogy in 1 Corinthians abound. In chapter 9 he defends his right to eat and drink and earn his living from his ministry using Temple mystagogy, comparing himself to the priests and workers in the Temple who offer sacrifices and "partake of the offerings of the altar," as a sign of the Lord's approval that "those who preach the gospel should

236 Israel's sins are often described as defiling God's sanctuary: When they offer their offspring to Molech they "defile My sanctuary and profane My holy name" (Lev 20:3); the sin offering is said to "atone for the holy place because of the uncleanness of the children of Israel, and because of their transgressions" (Lev 15:15–16); and Jeremiah refers to the evil deeds of Judah as setting "their abominations in the house which is called by My name, to pollute it" (Jer 7:30).

237 Berman, *The Temple*, p. 142.

238 Cf. the idea of *sancta contagio* whereby the Temple was believed to act as a source of divine power, transmitting holiness to the beholder of its sacred objects (Seaich, *A Great Mystery*, 65–68, 176–77).

live from the gospel" (9:13–14). Preaching the gospel is thus equated with the priestly sacrificial ministry in the Temple.

4.4.4 *Of Sinai, Sacrifice and Sacraments* (*1 Cor 10*)

Chapter 10 is probably the richest chapter of our epistle in its use of OT mystagogy, referring here back to Sinai and the Exodus – known to be the setting of the betrothal between God and Israel, later commemorated and perpetuated in the tabernacle and Temple.

> All our fathers were under the cloud, all passed through the sea, all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, all ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ. (1 Cor 10:1–4)

Paul uses the example of Israel in the desert as a warning to the Corinthians, recalling that the Israelites experienced a situation similar to theirs. The passage mentions well-known events of the Exodus narrative: the cloud (Exod 13:21), the sea (Exod 14:21f), the manna (Exod 16:4, 14–18), the spring (Exod 17:6; Num 20:7–13), and the golden calf apostasy (1 Cor 10:7; Exod 32). Commentators have seen in the cloud "a veiled reference to the presence of God in Israel's midst, comparable to the Spirit for Christians" – or the indwelling *Shekhinah*.[239] But what is remarkable here is how Paul daringly retrojects "proto-sacraments" of baptism and Eucharist back into the history of Israel's wanderings as prefigurations of the sacraments of the New Covenant. The crossing of the sea becomes the Israelites' baptism ("into" Moses); the manna and water from the rock, as "spiritual food" and "spiritual drink," are a sort of proto-Eucharist. Paul goes as far as identifying the rock itself with Christ, who accompanied the Israelites through the desert.[240] Yet despite the divine presence that dwelt among them and the "sacraments" that accompanied them along the way, "God was not well pleased" with them and most died in the wilderness. These things, Paul writes, became "our examples"

239 Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 445. See note 22 for the variations of interpretation on this theme.

240 Cf. the midrashic traditions of the rock following the Israelites through the desert (above, p. 165), and out of which came living waters (below, p. 300 n. 30). Philo wrote that the rock is "the wisdom of God … out of which he gave a drink to the souls who love God." (*Legum allegoriae* 2:21). Cf. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 448; Orr and Walther, *1 Corinthians*, 245.

(τύποι ἡμῶν), and were written "for our admonition." The Corinthians, therefore, should beware that the same does not happen to them. Of particular relevance is again the connection between idolatry and sexual immorality in the recounting of the golden calf episode (10:7; cf. Exod 32) and the similar incident at Baal Peor (10:8; cf. Num 25:1–9). Πορνεία is tantamount to idolatry and to betraying Christ; idolatry is spiritual adultery. Both, therefore, should be equally shunned (10:14). The invective against idolatry is a continuation of the argument that Paul began in 8:1 concerning the eating of things offered to idols. Why is the issue of food important? Because participation in cultic or sacred meals is equivalent to a unique sharing and communion (κοινωνία) with the deity that is worshiped – whether in the Jewish Temple (v. 18), in the Christian Eucharist (vv. 16–17), or in pagan cults (v. 20). The word κοινωνία is significant because of the close intimacy that it signifies ("fellowship," "participation," or "to share with someone in something").[241] Just as sharing in the sacrifices of the Temple means to be a "partaker of the altar" and to share in κοινωνία with YHWH, participating in pagan sacred meals, likewise, involves κοινωνία with demons – a union incompatible with the κοινωνία with Christ in the Eucharist. Partaking of the Lord's body and blood (10:16) is equivalent to intimately becoming one with him: it is a "one-flesh" union just as real as the one described in the Fourth Gospel (cf. John 6:56). Eating food sacrificed to idols, therefore, is a sort of "eucharist" with the demons. It is spiritual adultery, a betrayal of Christ tantamount to Israel's worship of the golden calf and her subsequent betrayals of YHWH constantly lamented by the prophets in the OT.

4.4.5 *Woman as Temple?* (*1 Cor 11:3–16*)

In chapter 11, Paul addresses the issue of head covering for women and men. This initially seems like a trivial, culturally-bound issue following the greater issues of fornication and idolatry. Paul has just discussed how worship in temples – whether Jewish, Christian, or pagan – is equivalent to κοινωνία with the respective deity. Then, suddenly, he switches to talking about the hierarchy of subordination between man and woman (itself subordinated to the hierarchy of God and Christ) and the need for women to cover their heads with a veil. Paul explains that the subordination of woman to man is not an arbitrary, culturally-bound custom but rather metaphysically stems from their origins in creation: "For man is not from woman, but woman from man. Nor was man

241 See Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 466 n. 18 for references on the meaning of κοινωνία in the NT.

created for the woman, but woman for the man" (1 Cor 11:8–9). Since woman was taken *from* man and *for* man, man has been given authority over her. This recalls again the tradition of the first androgynous man out of whom God created the female by taking a rib from his body. Yet the hierarchical relation between them is not one of qualitative superiority or domination. Man is the "image and glory of God; but woman is the glory of man" (v. 7). The first part of the verse is an allusion to Gen 1:26, where man is said to have been created "in the image and likeness" of God. The glory of God is thus equated with God's likeness, and it is man who reflects this glory and likeness. Yet if what is last in creation was first in intent, then woman is the ultimate achievement of God's creation. If man is the crown of creation, then woman is the crown jewel. In Batey's words: "Man who has been created in the image of God reflects the divine nature of his creator. Woman is a reflection of that reflection, for she has been taken from man."[242] 1 Corinthians thus reveals an integral relationship between the man-woman hierarchy and the Genesis creation narrative, somewhat akin to Ephesians 5:31's quote of Genesis 2:24 (as we will see below). But why the diversion to the subject of veils? Perhaps because veils are found both on women and in temples. Thus a woman's body is a sacred temple, consecrated to her husband and reflecting his glory, just as the temple is a sacred space consecrated to God, reflecting his glory and endowed with the holiness of a bride.[243] Granted, this association is rather daring and at best only indirectly implied, but it does logically follow from the metaphors of the Church as Temple and Body in 1 Corinthians, and as Bride as it will become more explicit in 2 Corinthians and in Ephesians.

4.4.6 *Unity of the Body* (*1 Cor 11:17–12:31*)

Paul then returns to the subject of the Lord's Supper (11:17–33), whose great sanctity derives from the fact that it is at the same time a memorial of Jesus' death and an anticipation of his eschatological parousia (vv. 23–26). In this setting, too, there are divisions and factions; some approach the Supper

242 Batey, *New Testament Nuptial Imagery*, 22–23.

243 Batey (*New Testament Nuptial Imagery*, 23 n. 4) explains the woman's obligation to wear a veil in a way that lends credence to this idea: "In the first century the veil was not primarily a symbol of modesty or dignity. The direct symbolism is that of being taken possession of, and as a result taken out of circulation as a free woman. The woman wearing the veil was to be unapproachable in a similar sense as a holy object, because she had been set apart for her husband – sanctified for him exclusively. For a wife to refuse to wear the veil was not just a breach of modesty but the rejection of God's created order of authority."

out of carnal desires to satisfy their hunger; others are drunk. Paul admonishes and warns those who approach the Lord's Table in such an "unworthy manner" that they become "guilty of the body and blood of the Lord" (v. 27). Such behavior openly contradicts the very essence of the Lord's Supper, for the partaking of the Eucharist is the source and sign of the Church's unity, and all members of Christ are "one bread and one body" when partaking of the one Eucharistic bread (10:17). Factions at the Lord's Supper (11:17–22) are therefore the negation of the very mystery that is being celebrated: to be "guilty of the body and blood of the Lord" and to "not discern his body" is to break the κοινωνία with the Lord and with his body. It is another form of desecration of the holy and sanctified.

In chapter 12, Paul continues to discuss the unity of the body, now addressing the diversity of gifts that exist within it. This body "is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ" (12:12). Paul again reminds the Corinthians that they have become members of this spiritual body at baptism, when they were "made to drink into the one Spirit" (v. 13).[244] The unity of this body is not one of bland uniformity but rather displays a rich diversity in its members, comparable to how each member of the human body plays a different yet indispensable role (12:15–31). What, then, builds up God's building, God's Temple and Christ's Body? Not worldly wisdom nor knowledge, but ἀγάπη: "Knowledge puffs up, but love edifies" (ἡ δὲ ἀγάπη οἰκοδομεῖ) (8:1). According to Paul's famous hymn of love, the patient, generous and joyful gift of self, in imitation of Christ (11:1, cf. Eph 5:1–2, 25), along with a deep love of truth which "bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things" (13:7) constitutes "the more excellent way" by which members of the Church build up the Body of Christ and Temple of the Holy Spirit.

4.4.7 *New Adam (and New Eve?) (1 Cor 15)*

In chapter 15, Paul deals with eschatology and the resurrection of the dead. He portrays Jesus as the last Adam who reverses the curse of death incurred by the first Adam: "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive" (15:22).[245] If the natural, earthly body of the first Adam was sown in corruption,

244 The Pauline connection between baptism and "drinking" the Spirit seems related to the water symbolism of baptism and the drinking of living water seen in John 3–4.

245 On the relation between Adam, bringer of death, and Christ, restorer of life, cf. also Rom 5:12–21. On the ideas of the Messianic King as new Adam in prophetic and apocalyptic literature, of Christ as the new Adam, and of the continuation in each Christian of

dishonor, and weakness, the spiritual heavenly body of the last Adam is sown in incorruption, glory and power (15:42–44). While the first Adam, from the earth, passively received life as a "living being," the last Adam, from heaven, gives life as a "life-giving spirit" (15:45–47). Believers, already bearing the image of the man of dust in their mortality, are also called to bear the image of the man of heaven in putting on immortality (15:48–56). The hope for the final day of the resurrection of the dead, "at the last trumpet" means in effect that the human Temple of the Holy Spirit will reach the fullness of its stature.

From Paul's multiple metaphors we are able to infer the following: Since Christ is the last Adam raised in δόξα (15:43), if we consider that "woman came from man" (i.e. Eve from Adam, 11:8), that man is the δόξα of God and woman the δόξα of man (11:7), and that the Church is Christ's body (10:17; 12:27), sustained by the Eucharistic communion of his body and blood (10:16), which will inherit his life and δόξα (15:49), we come very close to the concept of the Church as "new Eve," the bride "taken out" of the new Adam and endowed with his glory. This idea, only implicit here, will become explicit in 2 Corinthians and Ephesians.

4.4.8 *Summary: First Corinthians*

The First Epistle to the Corinthians does not explicitly refer to the marriage between Christ and the Church, except for perhaps a veiled reference in 6:12–20. But its Adam, Exodus, and especially Temple mystagogy is rich with many nuptial allusions: Christ is the new Adam (15:45) and his Body is the Church (12:27); believers have been baptized into this (collective) Body by the Holy Spirit (12:13). The Christian life is understood as Temple worship and sacred service; the (individual) body of the believer is a Temple consecrated to Christ and inhabited by the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit (6:19). As living Temple, the believer shares in intimate κοινωνία with Christ, especially through sharing at his table and partaking of his body and blood – in itself a kind of "one flesh" union; yet this intimate κοινωνία can be destroyed through illicit sexual union, which is tantamount to idolatry (6:18; 10:7–8). Baptism and the Eucharist, the sacramental means of entering into and maintaining communion with Christ, are depicted as fulfillment of the Sinai theophany and the Exodus (10:1–4). The concrete expression of this communion is the call to the members of the community to love each other with a generous and selfless ἀγάπη (8:1; 13:1–13). All of it is directed towards a definitive eschatological fulfillment on the day of the final resurrection of the dead (15:51–54).

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this Christological recapitulation of Adam, see Daniélou, *From Shadows to Reality*, 11–21. Scroggs (*The Last Adam*, esp. 75–112) focuses on Christ as the realization of true humanity.

4.5 The Second Epistle to the Corinthians: Living between the Times

4.5.1 *Introduction*

Paul's Second Epistle to the Corinthians betrays a much tenser relationship between the apostle and the Corinthians. The epistle, which has been called "uneven and digressive,"[246] is at its core a combative *apologia* for Paul's person and apostolic ministry, in which he must defend himself against a plethora of accusations that have been raised against him. Paul's most personal letter reveals him as suffering greatly, having recently narrowly escaped death yet finding all his consolation and placing all his trust "in God who raises the dead" (1:3–11). Precisely because of his intense sufferings, the epistle is permeated by the contrast between Paul's own weakness and the strength of Christ working in him, between his old, passing "outer man" and the new "inner man" that is gradually being transformed "from glory to glory."[247] To his detractors, Paul answers that just as it was precisely in the paradox of Christ's sufferings that his glory was revealed, so it is in the life of the apostle. As Renwick writes, "Christ himself must be the Christian paradigm of one who lives in God's presence," and his ministry on the cross as a sacrifice must function "as the visual image of the appearance of those who have entered God's presence through the new covenant."[248]

Though the epistle contains less Temple mystagogy than 1 Corinthians, its use and development of some of Paul's earlier themes (e.g. the Church/Body as God's Tabernacle/Temple), its description of the glory of the New Covenant in contrast to the glory of the Sinai covenant, and its explicit mention of the Church as Christ's bride make 2 Corinthians an important document for our topic. Paul explains how Jesus reveals the כְּבוֹד-ה׳, the divine glory that was formerly revealed on Mount Sinai and then dwelt in the Tabernacle/Temple (2 Cor 3:7–18) but is now hidden in weak human bodies – called "tabernacles." The disciple of Christ lives "between the times," having received by faith the guarantee of the glorious promise but not having yet attained the fullness

246 Barnett, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 15.

247 Martin (*2 Corinthians*, lxiii) summarizes this anthropological dualism: "This two-beat rhythm (death/life; distress/consolation; affliction/glory; weakness/strength) runs through the epistle and finds its heart in the incarnate (8:9), atoning (5:18–21), and enthroned Lord (4:5) whose 'grace' and strength meet every human need (12:10; 13:13), for he 'died and was raised' (5:15) and lives by God's power (13:4). Yet his present power is seen in the paradox of the suffering apostle (4:7; 13:4) who 'acts out' in his ministry the Gospel he proclaims and embodies (5:20)."

248 Renwick, *Paul, the Temple and the Presence of God*, 52.

of union with the beloved. A strong mystical longing for divine union is felt throughout the epistle – and this longing is nuptial: Paul is a father-betrother who has "betrothed [the Corinthians] to one husband" so that he may present them "as a chaste virgin betrothed to Christ" on their eschatological wedding day (11:2). The ecclesial bride – betrothed but not yet married, and still prone to infidelity – is compared to Eve who was deceived by the serpent. This passage thus reveals another connection with the Eden narrative and the Adam/Eve – Christ/Church parallel.

4.5.2 *Letter and Spirit, Old and New, from Glory to Glory* (*2 Cor 3*)

Paul tells the Corinthians that even in the midst of weakness and suffering, it is by finding one's entire sufficiency in God through the Spirit that the Christian becomes an "epistle of Christ," written "by the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of flesh, that is, of the heart" (3:1–6). Paul contrasts here "the letter that kills" of the Old Covenant, the commandments that had been written on tablets of stone, with "the Spirit that gives life" now outpoured in the New Covenant. This is an allusion to the prophecy of Ezekiel 36:26–27 and its promise of giving a new heart (of flesh instead of stone) and a new spirit to Israel. The contrast between letter and spirit, stone and flesh, death and life then leads into a further contrast between the glory of the two ministries and two covenants.

This comparison between the glory of the Old and New is developed by a "Christian midrash" based on Exod 34:29–35, the narrative of Moses coming down from Mount Sinai with the tablets of the testimony, with the skin of his face "shining with beams" of the Lord's glory (קָרַן עוֹר פָּנָיו, in 2 Cor 3:7: τὴν δόξαν τοῦ προσώπου αὐτοῦ). If the passing ministry of "death" and "condemnation" of the Old Covenant was already glorious, how much more the permanent "ministry of the Spirit" and "of righteousness" that is revealed in Christ. The "glory" (δόξα) of God, or "Christ in you, the hope of glory" (see an equivalent expression in Col 1:27) is the divine promise and hidden inner reality that empowers the apostle to continue his work in the midst of trials and sufferings. We have already discussed the role of the כְּבוֹד-ה׳ that filled the Tabernacle and Temple, and how it was appropriated to the person of Jesus in John's Prologue. The divine כָּבוֹד/δόξα is also one of the central themes of 2 Corinthians, appearing 10 times as noun and verb in the present paragraph (3:7–11). The superiority of the glory of the New Covenant over the Old also evokes Haggai's prophecy that the Lord would one day in the future fill the new Temple with glory, and that "the glory of this latter Temple shall be greater than the former" (Hag 2:8–9). This glory and radiance of God, now gradually imparted by Christ unto the believer (who is a Tabernacle and Temple – see

below), is the ultimate goal of the Christian life (3:18); it is permanent (3:11), eternal and "heavy" (4:17).[249]

The second part of the metaphor (3:12–15) focuses on the veil (מַסְוֶה, LXX and NT: τὸ κάλυμμα) that covered Moses' face and hid the shining glory that radiated from him when he spoke to the children of Israel after his encounter with YHWH. As "their minds were hardened" (ἐπωρώθη) then, so "even to this day, when Moses is read, a veil lies on their heart" and they are unable to perceive the all-surpassing glory of the gospel. This veil is taken away "in Christ," "when one turns to the Lord" (vv. 14, 16), and the glory is experienced by receiving the "deposit" of the Spirit, in anticipation and as a guarantee of the fullness that will be received at the end of the earthly journey (1:22; 5:5). Receiving the gospel causes the inner illumination of the understanding so that "we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord" (3:18). Why is the glory seen "as in a mirror"? Because the glory of the Lord is reflected through Christ "who is the image of God" (4:4). In other words, "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God" is seen "in the face of Jesus Christ" (4:6). It is precisely into this glorious image that Christians must be transformed, from the image of the man of dust (Adam) into the image of the man from heaven (Christ).[250]

4.5.3 *Treasures in Earthen Vessels and the Symbolism of Sacrifice* (*2 Cor 4*)

Barnett suggests that Paul's description of the δόξα is autobiographical: he is describing the glory that he saw and experienced on the Damascus road when he encountered the glorified Christ shining in a dazzling light from heaven. The book of Acts indeed has Paul recalling his conversion as an experience of heavenly glory: "I could not see for the glory of that light" (ἀπὸ τῆς δόξης τοῦ φωτὸς ἐκείνου).[251] But for now, this unsurpassable glory is temporarily hidden within weak bodies, and Christians struggling in the midst of trials guard a treasure hidden in "earthen vessels," living by the excellence of God's power

249 See Barnett, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (45–46, 178–209) and his discussion on the "hope of glory." The expression "weight of glory" (βάρος δόξης) is perhaps a pun on כָּבוֹד and its etymological connection with כָּבֵד.

250 Cf. 1 Cor 15:49; Rom 8:29.

251 Acts 22:11; cf. 9:3–4; 26:13. cf. Barnett, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 184, 206. The glory that Paul saw at the moment of his conversion is perhaps related to the glory of the glorified Christ that Peter, John and James witnessed at the transfiguration (Luk 9:35), possibly evoking the "glory of the Lord" at Sinai, in the Tabernacle and in the Temple. Cf. p. 122 above and Serra, *Contribuiti dell'antica letteratura ebraica*, 116f for connections between the Transfiguration and Sinai.

rather than by their own (4:7). Just as Haggai encouraged his audience not to focus on the visible δόξα of the Second Temple (which was disappointingly inferior to the glory of the former and more grandiose Temple of Solomon), so Paul is saying that the superior δόξα of Christ is not yet visibly manifest.[252] The life and resurrection of Jesus is made manifest in "mortal flesh" – through the "outward man" that is perishing – while "the inward man is being renewed day by day" (4:16). It is precisely the temporary "light affliction" that works "a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory" (αἰώνιον βάρος δόξης): the sufferings of this present age are preparing and forming believers for the glory of the coming age.[253]

As Renwick points out, Paul's use of the expression "earthen vessels" (ὀστρακίνοις σκεύεσιν) is particular in that it describes the vessel that was used to bear the sin offering after its sacrificial death in the priestly legislation (σκεῦος ὀστράκινον, Lev 6:28; LXX 6:21). If such an association is intended, it would mean that Paul is portraying his own life as one in which the "sin offering" of Christ's death has been placed.[254] In light of the statement that he is "always carrying in the body the death of Jesus" (4:10), it would also imply that the "earthen vessel" (the believer's body) is the container for the sin-offering, and the "treasure" (Christ's sacrifice) is the sin-offering. This cultic allusion would be consistent with the use of the words ὀσμή and εὐωδία in 2:14–16 to describe the "fragrance" and "aroma" of Christ propagated by his disciples. Paul uses the expression ὀσμὴ εὐωδίας elsewhere, either referring to material gifts received as a "sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God" (Phil 4:18), or to Christ's own sacrifice (Eph 5:2),[255] and this expression is quite common in the LXX as describing the pleasing odor of a sacrifice offered to God on the altar (cf. Gen 8:21; Exod 29:18; Lev 1:9; Num 15:3; Ezek 6:13). We also recall that both words ὀσμή and εὐωδία also appear in Sir 24:15 as the fragrance of Lady Wisdom "like the fragrance of frankincense in the tabernacle" symbolizing the presence of God.[256] This cultic interpretation proposed by Barrett, Renwick, and others,

252 Cf. Renwick's discussion on the relationship between Hag 2 and 2 Cor 3:1–11 (*Paul, the Temple and the Presence of God*, 113–121).

253 2 Cor 4:16–18. The future glory of God often appears in the NT as the fruit of present weakness, sufferings and afflictions. Cf. Rom 8:18–21; 2 Cor 11:30; 12:5–10; Eph 3:13; 2 Thess 1:4; Heb 2:9–10; 1 Pet 1:7–8; 4:13; 5:1, 10.

254 Christ is called "ἁμαρτία" in 2 Cor 5:21. This is often translated as Christ becoming "sin," but it could just as well mean "sin-offering," since the LXX translates "sin-offering" as "ἁμαρτία" (Lev 4:24, 29, 34; 5:6). Cf. Renwick, *Paul, the Temple, and the Presence of God*, 83.

255 See below, p. 225.

256 See above, p. 66.

would mean that Paul views the life of the believer as "the smoke that arises from the sacrifice of Christ to God, diffusing as it ascends the knowledge of God that is communicated in the cross."[257]

4.5.4 *Earthly Tent and Heavenly Habitation* (*2 Cor 5*)

In chapter 5, the text becomes directly relevant to our study of nuptial and Temple symbolism. Here the anthropological dualism between the "outer person" of this present age and the "inner person" of the coming age adopts a tabernacle language reminiscent of John 1:14 and the anthropic Temple of 1 Corinthians:

> For we know that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed with our habitation which is from heaven, if indeed, having been clothed, we shall not be found naked. For we who are in this tent groan, being burdened, not because we want to be unclothed, but further clothed, that mortality may be swallowed up by life. (2 Cor 5:1–4)

Using quasi-Platonic language, Paul contrasts the frail human body, "our earthly house, this tent" (ἡ ἐπίγειος ἡμῶν οἰκία τοῦ σκήνους), with our permanent home, the eternal "building from God" (οἰκοδομὴν ἐκ θεοῦ), a "house not made with hands" (οἰκίαν ἀχειροποίητον)[258] and a "habitation from heaven" (τὸ οἰκητήριον ἡμῶν τὸ ἐξ οὐρανοῦ). If the earthly tent-house is the mortal human body,[259] the eternal, heavenly building from God is undoubtedly the resurrected body, in light of the resurrection mentioned in the immediate context (4:14) and the language of being "clothed upon" and of death being "swallowed up by life" (the same expressions used in the resurrection discourse of

257 Cf. Barnett, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 99.

258 The οἰκίαν ἀχειροποίητον stands in contrast to houses "made with hands" in which God cannot dwell (cf. 1 Kgs 8:27–30; Acts 7:48; 17:24). By contrast, the heavenly sanctuary that Christ entered is also said to be "made without hands" (cf. Heb 9:11). This expression is reminiscent of the saying attributed to Jesus at his trial: "We heard Him say, 'I will destroy this temple made with hands, and within three days I will build another made without hands'" (Mark 14:58; cf. John 2:17–21). The similarity of language between Mark 14:58 (καταλύσω, οἰκοδομήσω, ἀχειροποίητον) and 2 Cor 5:1 (καταλυθῇ, οἰκοδομή, ἀχειροποίητον) indicates that Paul was familiar with this saying.

259 Cf. also Wis 9:15; 2 Pet 1:13–15 for the use of σκῆνος (or σκήνωμα) as a metaphor for the human body.

1 Cor 15:53–54).[260] The believer groans as long as he is subject to his earthly body, not only because of its weakness and proneness to suffering and death, but especially because this being "at home in the body" means to be "absent from the Lord" (2 Cor 5:6). One feels here Paul's eschatological longing for union with Christ. He views it as infinitely better to depart the fragile bodily σκῆνος to be "present with the Lord" (5:7) than to continue living the earthly life in relative absence from him.[261] Paul feels "compelled" by the love of Christ, who "died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again" (2 Cor 5:14–15). The fullest expression of love was manifested by the Messiah's willingness to suffer and die for his people. Recognition of this love calls for self-surrender back to him and following in his footsteps by "carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body" (4:10).

The obvious difference between this depiction of the body as σκῆνος and the metaphor of the body as Temple of the Holy Spirit employed elsewhere is the contrast between presence and absence. When Paul calls the body a ναὸς θεοῦ or ναὸς τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος, he is emphasizing the indwelling *presence* of God in the believer, whereas here the frail σκῆνος, although denoting the Tabernacle, is characterized by the relative *absence* of the Lord and longing for future union with him. The difference is probably more didactic than substantial. If Paul must remind the Corinthians that they are a Temple of God, this is precisely because they have become unaware or forgetful of the "treasure in earthen vessels" that they are carrying, and they are desecrating their own Temple by their fornication.[262] Since the indwelling *Shekhinah* in them must be apprehended by faith, without this faith (or as a consequence of πορνεία or other sins) the real *presence* can easily be cast out and come to be perceived as a real *absence*. Thus the reminder that the divine presence indwells the bodily Temple aims at spurring on the Christian to lead a sanctified life worthy of the Holy Spirit, given to him as a guarantor of the eschatological glory to come. On the other hand, the σκῆνος metaphor emphasizes the relative *absence* of Christ as an encouragement to not despair of temporary afflictions and to look forward to the eschatological fulfillment of the heavenly resurrected body. Thus the Christian lives "between the times," between presence and absence,

260 Barnett (*The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 258) rejects the other options that have been proposed regarding the "habitation from heaven": (1) the body of Christ, the Church; (2) the New Jerusalem; (3) the heavenly Temple of the Lord's presence; (4) the mansion-like abode to which the Lord's people go after death.

261 This yearning is very similar to the one that Paul expresses in Phil 1:21–23.

262 Cf. 1 Cor 3:16–17, 6:15–20 above and 2 Cor 6:14–16 below.

having received by faith the guarantee of the glorious promise but not having yet attained the fullness of union with the beloved. He is betrothed but not yet married, spurred on by confidence in the love of Christ yet struggling to live out this commitment to his Lord in steadfastness and faithfulness. In contrasting the fragile, earthly σκῆνος with the eternal, heavenly "building from God" (οἰκοδομὴν ἐκ θεοῦ) and "house" (οἰκίαν), Paul is also alluding to the contrast between the temporary lightweight, portable and fragile Tabernacle (σκῆνος) that accompanied the Israelites during their desert wanderings, and the permanent, imposing and splendid Temple in Jerusalem that replaced it and was the renown of the nearby nations.

4.5.5 *Temple of God Revisited* (*2 Cor 6:14–18*)

The next relevant passage has much in common with those seen in 1 Corinthians:

> Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever? And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God (ναὸς θεοῦ ἐσμεν ζῶντος). As God has said: "I will dwell in them (Ἐνοικήσω ἐν αὐτοῖς) and walk among them. I will be their God, and they shall be My people" (2 Cor 6:14–16).[263]

Paul returns to the theme of the spiritual Temple of God again within the context of separation: certain ways of life and patterns of behavior that are incompatible with the believer's consecrated and sanctified state must be excluded. Paul exhorts the Corinthians to "not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers,"[264] an expression whose meaning is not immediately clear. Who are the "unbelievers" and what does it mean to "not be unequally yoked" with them? Given the five rhetorical questions that follow the prohibition, pitting the sanctified state of the disciple of Christ against the evil

263 Gärtner has shown the parallels between this passage and the theology of the Qumran community (*The Temple and the Community*, 49–56), including the community taking over the role of Temple, the exegesis of OT texts to support this claim, and the requirement for purity deriving from it.

264 This metaphor is based on two OT texts, LXX Lev 19:19 which forbids the cross-breeding of animals, and Deut 22:10 which prohibits the yoking together of an ox and a donkey for plowing.

ways of the world, it would seem that the "unbelievers" are the unconverted pagans and idol-worshippers of Corinth who may also have been involved in temple prostitution. The state of being "unequally yoked" with them most plausibly refers to either intermarriage or participation in their cultic life.[265] It is probable that Paul had both meanings in mind, since the most common cause of idolatry in Israel had always been intermarriage with pagans.[266] Paul's plea to keep the Temple of God free from inappropriate union with unbelievers and from idols is supported by a concoction of several OT citations recalling God's covenantal promises to His people. The first and most important is based on Jer 32:38, Ezek 37:27, and especially Lev 26:11–12.

Lev 26:11–12	**2 Cor 6:16c**
"I will set My tabernacle among you, and My soul shall not abhor you. I will walk among you and be your God, and you shall be My people."	As God has said: "I will dwell in them And walk among them. I will be their God, and they shall be My people."

The context of the three OT citations helps us to better grasp the meaning of the passage from 2 Corinthians. Both Lev 26 and Ezek 37 refer to YHWH's promise of establishing his sanctuary or tabernacle in the midst of his people; all three passages talk about His faithful covenant love and solemn pledge to "be their God" and have them as His people. Paul continues by loosely citing another group of OT verses exhorting Israel to separate themselves from the Gentiles and from all that is common, unclean and defiling (2 Cor 6:17–18). This is especially a reference to Isa 52:11, where the prophet urges Israel to separate herself from Babylon and the surrounding pagan

265 As Barnett notes (*The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 345), Paul did not ban social interaction with "unbelievers" (1 Cor 5:9–10; 10:27; 14:22–24). He did allow believers to remain in the bonds of marriage with unbelievers (1 Cor 7:12–15), but by this he probably meant situations where one of the spouses, already married, would come to faith. It is unlikely that he would have approved the marriage of Christians to unbaptized pagans in normal circumstances.

266 Cf. Num 25:1–9; 1 Kgs 11:1–8; 22:25–26. We also recall the recurring connection between fornication and idolatry in the NT (cf. 1 Cor 10:7–8, 14; 6:15, 18; Col 3:5).

nations.[267] By citing deutero-Isaiah, Paul is comparing the Corinthians with those who "bear the vessels of the LORD" – a holy people set apart for קדושה and for divine service, well-fitting to their established identity as sanctified "Temple of the living God." Paul then switches from Temple to familial imagery in a loose paraphrase of God's filial covenant with David in 2 Sam 7:14 (changed from the singular to the plural to include the entire community of believers): "I will be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, says the LORD Almighty" (2 Cor 6:18). Separation from the unclean is not only for the sake of the ritual/cultic purity of the ecclesial Temple of God, but even more so because of the divine filiation that it implies. The status of the Corinthian church as adopted sons and daughters of the Most High already implies their betrothal with the Son of God which brought them into the divine family.

4.5.6 *A Chaste Virgin Betrothed to Christ* (*2 Cor 11:2–3*)

With our last passage from 2 Corinthians, we encounter what is probably the earliest explicit use of bridal imagery of the New Testament:

> For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity [and purity] that is in Christ. (2 Cor 11:2–3)

Paul is playing here the role of the father-betrother who zealously guards the betrothed until she is ready to be presented to her husband on the long-awaited wedding day. Alternatively, he takes on the role of the *shoshbin*/*paranymphios* elsewhere claimed by John the Baptist.[268] Despite the moral record of the Corinthians that is anything but immaculate, Paul continues to use metaphors of perfect sanctity and purity to describe their community. Thus the holy "Temple of the living God" now takes the form of a "chaste virgin" (παρθένον ἁγνὴν). Both metaphors have in common the state of קדושה, being consecrated and set apart for a special purpose by a solemn oath and binding covenant to

267 Cf. also Ezek 20:34, 41; 2 Sam 7:14.

268 This role of father-betrother is in conformity with ancient marriage customs in Israel when the father was responsible for the daughter's virginity and faithfulness to her betrothed until the marriage (cf. Gen 29:23; Deut 22:13–21). Cf. Barnett, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 498–99, n. 18; Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 499; Bruce, *1 and 2 Corinthians*, 234; and above, p. 148 n. 114.

a beloved – God, the Bridegroom – and thus requiring the zealous exclusion of anything that could defile the sanctified temple/bride.

The betrothal of the Corinthian church also shares with Temple imagery the state of being "between the times." We have mentioned the tension between the inner *presence* of Christ in the bodily Temple, received in baptism and guaranteed by the deposit of the Holy Spirit, and the relative *absence* of the Lord which continues to distress the believer in his temporary σκῆνος, requiring of him commitment, endurance and faithfulness in the hope of reaching the eschatological glory of union in his eternal, heavenly dwelling. Likewise, the bride here is betrothed to her divine Bridegroom; she already belongs to Him. But this does not make her immune from infidelity while the bridegroom is still away. The marriage still lies in the future,[269] and she remains for now in danger of being seduced by "another Jesus," "a different spirit," or "a different gospel" – a cause of many worries to her father-betrother! Immediately after announcing his betrothal of the Corinthian community to Christ, Paul expresses his concern that "somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity [and purity][270] that is in Christ" (11:3; cf. Gen 3:13). This is another occurrence where NT nuptial imagery is related to the Adam and Eve narrative.[271] Paul's comparison of the Church with Eve is more direct here than in 1 Corinthians 11. In Genesis, the serpent's deception led to Eve's disobedience of God's command, followed by Adam's own disobedience which resulted in their expulsion from Eden. Paul may also be drawing from extra-biblical tradition and Jewish legends of the snake sexually seducing Eve in the garden.[272] According to these legends, Eve's sin was not only disobedience against God but also infidelity towards her husband. This would provide a fitting background for Paul's idea that Christ is the New Adam and the Church is the New Eve, in danger of being

269 Marriage in ancient Israel was divided into two separate ceremonies: the betrothal, and the nuptial ceremony which followed a year later and consummated the marriage. Between the two ceremonies the girl was legally the man's wife, but they did not have marital relations and she thus remained a virgin until the nuptial ceremony. For a good summary of betrothal and marriage customs in ancient Israel (with rabbinic sources), as well as the parallels with the betrothal/marriage of the Church and her present status as living *zwischen den Zeiten*, see Batey, "Paul's Bride Image – A Symbol of Realistic Eschatology."

270 καὶ τῆς ἁγνότητος is missing in several manuscripts.

271 Cf. 1 Cor 11:8–9; 15:22, 45–49; Eph 5:31.

272 Cf. *b. Yebamot* 103b; *b. Avodah Zarah* 22b; *b. Shabb.* 146a, with variants found in earlier Jewish apocalypses (1 En. 69:6; 2 En. 31:6; Apoc. Ab. 23). Cf. Martin, *2 Corinthians*, 333; Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 487, 499–500.

tempted and seduced away by the serpent from her bridegroom and from her consecrated and sanctified state.[273]

4.5.7 *Summary: Second Corinthians*

Paul emphasizes in 2 Corinthians the current situation of the Church living "between the times," suffering in the midst of temporary distress but confident in God's power. The community's relationship with God is expressed nuptially and spans all of salvation history. The Corinthian community is betrothed to Christ like Eve was betrothed to Adam in the Garden, but she is not yet united with him in marriage (11:2–3). She has received a sure deposit of his δόξα – a glory far superior to the כָּבוֹד of the Sinai covenant (3:7–9) – but this glory is still veiled (4:3–4). For now, it is lived out in mystical union with the bridegroom's self-sacrifice in "earthen vessels" (4:7), rising up to God as a pleasing odor like the Temple's sin offerings (2:14–16). The δόξα will only be revealed when the frail σκῆνος of the mortal body gives way to the "building from God" and "house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens" (5:1). In the meantime, it must be carefully guarded lest it be lost: The bodily Temple must be kept pure through sanctified behavior. Taking on an "unequal yoke" with unbelievers through sexual immorality or intermarriage is tantamount to idolatry: it causes the desecration of the Temple, casts away God's indwelling presence, and violates the filial covenant by which believers become the Father's sons and daughters (6:14–18). Likewise, receiving "another spirit" or "another gospel" means no less than the "chaste virgin" betraying her bridegroom. She must therefore be a faithful guardian of the divine *presence* that dwells in her "earthen vessel" while persevering in the relative *absence* of the Lord until the divine espousals that await her at the eschatological end of her earthly journey.

4.6 The Epistle to the Ephesians: One Flesh

4.6.1 *Introduction*

The Epistle to the Ephesians makes extensive use of Temple, body, and bridal imagery in its rich depiction of the Church as building, holy Temple, Christ's body, and Christ's bride. It is characterized by a high Christology and rich ecclesiology, and the Pauline author (whom we will call "Paul" here)[274]

273 Cf. Chavasse, *The Bride of Christ*, 70; Batey, *New Testament Nuptial Imagery*, 12.

274 Scholarship continues to be divided regarding the authorship of the Epistle to the Ephesians. The four main schools of thought are: (a) Pauline authorship; (b) Paul dictated or wrote an original script that was later edited and augmented by a deutero-Pauline

accordingly lauds and extols God the Father for having "blessed [the Church] with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ" (1:3). The Messiah

editor; (c) non-Pauline authorship; (d) the evidence is not conclusive enough to pass judgment (Barth, *Ephesians,* 36–40). Although Raymond E. Brown claims that "the evidence has pushed 70 to 80 percent of critical scholarship to reject" the Pauline authorship of Ephesians (*Introduction to the New Testament*, 629), Harold Hoehner demonstrates that this view is incorrect. In his 2002 commentary (*Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary*, 9–20), Hoehner surveys the positions of 279 Ephesian scholars since 1792, and notes that only during the 1970s and the 1980s did a majority of scholars reject the Pauline authorship of the epistle (54 and 58 percent respectively). In the 1990s, the number is even, with 20 scholars in favor of Pauline authorship and 20 scholars against, as is the cumulative number from 1961 to 2001 (59 in favor and 58 against). Works that argue in favor of pseudonymity include Raymond E. Brown, *Introduction to the New Testament* (New York: Doubleday, 1996), 627–30; Ernest Best, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Ephesians* (Edingurgh: T&T Clark, 1998), 6–36; Andrew Lincoln, *Ephesians* (Waco, TX: Word, 1990), lix–lxxiii; Margaret McDonald, *Colossians and Ephesians* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 2000); and Rudolf Schnackenburg, *The Epistle to the Ephesians* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1991). Works that support Pauline authorship include T.K. Abbott, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistles to the Ephesians and to the Colossians* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1909, 1991), ix–xxiii; Markus Barth, *Ephesians* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1974), *4–6*, 36–52; Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Writings of the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986); C.E. Arnold, "Ephesians, Letter of," in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, ed. Gerald F. Hawthorne et al. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1993), 240–43; Peter T. O'Brien, *Ephesians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999); Harold W. Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002); Peter S. Williamson, *Ephesians* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009); and *ibid*., "Who Wrote Ephesians? An Online Postscript," available at http://www.catholiccommentaryonsacredscripture.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/ephesians-authorship-online-postscript.pdf. Without prejudice towards the ongoing debate, we will refer to the author of Ephesians as "Paul" in the present paper for the sake of simplicity and on the basis of (a) the epistle's own claim of Pauline authorship (1:1); (b) the depth of its Pauline theology which, although displaying development and growth over Paul's earlier epistles, nonetheless shows more continuity than divergence with genuine Pauline thought and ideas; (c) the uncontested apostolic origin of the epistle among the Church fathers; (d) the inconclusive nature of the arguments that have been presented by opponents of Pauline authorship. We concur with Barth (p. 41): "If the maxim 'innocent until proven guilty,' *in dubio pro reo*, is applied here, then the tradition which accepts Paul as the author of Ephesians is more recommendable than the suggestion of an unknown author. The burden of proof lies with those questioning the tradition. The evidence produced by them is neither strong nor harmonious enough to invalidate the judgment of tradition. Although it cannot be definitely proven that Ephesians is genuinely Pauline, nevertheless it is still possible to uphold its authenticity."

has come to reveal the deepest mystery and wisdom of God, formerly hidden but now made manifest to reveal the richness of his grace, power, blessings and unfathomable love towards those who have been made alive "in Christ." This is for the ultimate purpose of gathering together all creation in him, to the praise of God's glory. The epistle's key nuptial passage (Eph 5:22–33) compares the union of Christ and the Church with the one-flesh union of man and woman, where the bridegroom is to offer himself up sacrificially for the sake of his beloved.[275] This marriage between Christ and the Church is described in strong cultic and sacrificial language reminiscent of the Temple service. Christ loved the Church, His Bride, through a total self-sacrifice of love which provides atonement, forgiveness, and purification, makes reparation for sin, calls to conversion, and restores communion with God. Christ also sanctifies and cleanses the Church "with the washing of water by the word" – an allusion to baptism and possibly to a pre-nuptial bridal bath. He also nourishes and cherishes the Church, called "his own flesh" and "his body" in yet another nuptial reference to the Eden narrative of Gen 2. For Paul, as Eve was originally one with Adam before she was taken out of his side, so the pre-existent Church was originally one with Christ, "of His flesh and of His bones," before she was "taken out of his side."

4.6.1.1 Central Themes in Ephesians

Paul delineates throughout the epistle a sharp contrast between the former way of life of Christians, which continues to prevail among the unbelievers, and the riches and blessings of the glorious Church redeemed by Christ. The striking dualism between sin and sanctity, alienation and reconciliation, darkness and light, is evident when viewed in tabular form. Notice how Christ is consistently named as the source and active agent of every promise, every blessing, every gift, and every virtue bestowed upon the Church:

275 On the centrality of nuptial symbolism in Ephesians, Sampley writes: "for the author of Ephesians, the marriage relationship is transparent to God's purposes on a larger scale . . . no other relationship within the family so fully mirrors God's purposes in the universe." (*And the Two Shall Become One Flesh*, 149).

The World / former life of Christians	The Church
Dead in trespasses and sins (2:1)	Christ made you alive (2:1)
Walking according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air (2:2)	Sitting together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus (2:6)
Children of wrath (2:3)	Recipients of God's mercy and grace in Christ (2:4, 7–8)
Sons of disobedience, caught in the lusts of the flesh (2:2)	Created in Christ for good works (2:10)
Aliens and strangers far off, without hope and without God (2:11–13)	Brought near by the blood of Christ (2:11–13)
Separation and enmity between Jews and Gentiles (2:14–16)	Christ created one new man from the two, now reconciled and at peace (2:14–18)
Strangers and foreigners (2:19)	Fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God; part of God's building and holy temple – with Christ as cornerstone; "a dwelling place of God in the Spirit" (2:19–22)
Christ's mystery is hidden (3:3–5, 9)	The mystery and wisdom of God now revealed by the Spirit to the Church, in Christ (3:3, 10)
Children tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine (4:14)	Speaking the truth in love, growing up as a body in all things into Christ the head (4:15–16)
The "old man" walks in futility of mind, with understanding darkened, alienated from the life of God, ignorant, blinded, given over to lewdness, working uncleanness with greediness (4:17–19)	"Learning Christ" and putting on the new man is to be created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness (4:22–24)
Lying, stealing, speaking evil, bitterness and anger (4:25–31)	Laboring, speaking edifying words, being kind, tenderhearted and forgiving as God in Christ (4:25–31)
Fornication, uncleanness, covetousness, filthiness, foolish talking, coarse jesting (5:3–7)	A pure bride, holy and without blemish, walking in self-giving love as Christ, giving thanks (5:1–2, 27)
Darkness (5:8–13)	Light in the Lord (5:8–13)
Unwise, drunk with wine (5:15–17)	Wise, filled with the Spirit, singing and giving thanks to God in the name of Jesus (5:15–20)
Men-pleasers, given to wrath and threats (6:4–7)	Obedient with goodwill and bondservants to Christ (6:1–9)

If Christ is the agent and cause of the radical transformation of the former alienated, blind, dead children of wrath into God's holy Temple and pure bride, the instrument through which he effects this remarkable metamorphosis is the Church, described in a rich blend of images that is almost disconcerting. It seems that Paul at times mixes his metaphors, jumping from one image to the other rather arbitrarily. He describes the Church as:

- a predestined, eternal and heavenly community (1:3–6, 2:6)
- the revelation of the mystery and wisdom of God (1:9, 3:9–10)
- the community of the redeemed by Christ's grace (1:7, 2:8)
- holy (ἅγιος) (1:1, 4, 15, 18; 2:19; 3:18; 4:12; 5:3)
- God's adopted family and household, reconciled and united in love (1:5, 2:13–19, 3:15)
- created "for the praise of his glory" (1:6, 12, 14)
- the Body of Christ (1:23, 2:16, 3:6, 4:4, 4:12, 4:16, 4:25, 5:23, 5:30)
- recipient of God's rich inheritance and power, and partaker of his promises (1:11–14, 18, 2:7, 3:6)
- A "building" growing into a "holy temple in the Lord" and "dwelling place of God in the Spirit" (2:20–22)
- Christ's fullness (1:23; 4:13)
- The new, holy, "perfect man" (4:13, 24)
- Christ's bride (5:22–33)
- God's army (6:10–20)

4.6.1.2 *Kedushah* and Love

This elaborate vision of the Church prompts the question: what is the relationship between these images and metaphors? The common thread connecting them together seems to be the concept of קדוּשָׁה, or the emphasis on the holiness of the Church and her members. The word ἅγιος (saint, holy) and its corresponding verb ἁγιάζω (sanctify) appear no less than 16 times in our short epistle. The term describes God's own transcendent essence and the state of being set apart and consecrated for a special purpose.[276] Applying it to the Church in Ephesians means that it is understood to be the community of the elect, set apart for consecrated service to God, "for the praise of his glory." The Church's *kedushah*, along with the attendant promises and blessings that are its by-product, is not of her own making but is gratuitously inherited, a pure gift of grace from her Maker and Redeemer (2:5–9), just as the

276 See the discussion on קדוּשָׁה below, p. 357.

kedushah of the Tabernacle/Temple was not inherent to it but derived from and depended upon God's presence within it (cf. Exod 25:8; 29:43–45). Israel's *kedushah* was rooted in God's covenantal bond of love with her, initiated in the redemption from Egypt, sealed at Sinai through his gratuitous adoption, and guaranteed through generous promises of rich blessings (cf. Exod 19:6; Deut 7:6–9). In the same way, the Church's *kedushah* is entirely dependent upon Christ's election and covenantal bond with her (1:4–5, 2:6–7), rooted in his all-surpassing love (1:4, 3:17–19, 5:1–2, 25), accomplished in the act of redemption through his blood (1:7), sealed through his adoption of her members and their integration into God's family (1:5, 2:13–19, 3:15), and promising them incomparable heavenly blessings (1:3, 11). The moral virtue and perfection of the Church and of her members, as important as it may be, is not a prerequisite for election and adoption, but rather the fruit of the election, adoption, and union with the Messiah. The moral element of *kedushah* is "to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called" (Eph 4:1). The Church thus participates in God's *kedushah* only "in Christ," by partaking in his own life and by being joined to him as the members of a body are joined to the head. At the same time, the holiness of each member contributes to the health of the whole body, just as the cells in a human body must remain attached to the body to stay alive, and the body, conversely, must be made of healthy cells to live. From these observations it becomes easier to connect the rest of the dots. If in Christ "dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily" (cf. Col 2:9),[277] the Church, in turn, as "Christ's fullness" (1:23) is the next link in the chain. Just as the Temple "contained" the *Shekhinah*, the living presence of God, the Church as God's Temple and visible body of Christ is the mediator of the divine presence and love in the world.

4.6.1.3 Ecclesial Body and Temple

The two dominant themes of *kedushah* and love in Ephesians logically imply a third one that is equally central to the epistle, namely unity.[278] It is expressed regarding the cosmos, where all things are to be gathered together in one in Christ (1:10), and especially regarding the Church, most fittingly described via the metaphor of the body and its members united to Christ the head (4:4–6, 11–16; cf. 1 Cor 12:12–30). Unity is also expressed as more specifically

277 On the close relationship between the theology of Colossians and Ephesians, see Abbott, *The Epistles to the Ephesians and to the Colossians*, xxiii–xxiv; Best, *Ephesians*, 20–25; Lincoln, *Ephesians*, xlvii–lvi.

278 On the unity of the Church in Ephesians, see Benoit, "L'Unité de l'Église selon l'Epître aux Éphésiens."

pertaining to the unity of Jews and Gentiles: by breaking down "the middle wall of partition" Jesus has put to death the enmity between them and granted to both "access by one Spirit to the Father" (2:14–18). Commentators have often proposed that the reference to the "middle wall of partition" is probably an allusion to the wall that separated the court of Israel from the court of the Gentiles in the Temple, preventing the latter's access to full communion with God.[279] This discussion on the unity of Jew and Gentile, reconciled to God "in one body through the cross" (2:16) in and through the Church, leads to another masterful Pauline mixing of metaphors with the declaration that Gentile Christians are

> no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God (οἰκεῖοι τοῦ θεοῦ), having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows (αὔξει) into a holy temple in the Lord (ναὸν ἅγιον ἐν κυρίῳ), in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God (κατοικητήριον τοῦ θεοῦ) in the Spirit. (Eph 2:19–22)

Paul is describing a building that is curiously *growing* into a holy temple. Now buildings and temples are normally built; plants, living bodies, and people grow; but buildings and temples do not usually grow. The use of αὐξάνω here shows that while Paul is describing the Church as Temple, he is simultaneously keeping in mind the metaphor of the Church as Body that was mentioned in 1:23 and 2:16 and will be extensively developed in chapter 4. He is thus juxtaposing the two metaphors of the Church as Body and as Temple as he did in 1 Corinthians. Ephesians, however, reveals one marked development in the Pauline theology of the spiritual temple: whereas in 1 Corinthians the Temple of the Holy Spirit is both the individual believer and the local

279 The allusion is possibly linked to Matthew's description of the ripping of the veil that opened the way to the Holy of Holies. Barth, in *Ephesians 1–3* (283–87) has compiled some possibilities of what Paul could have meant by the "dividing wall": (a) the wall separating the Court of the Gentiles from the Court of Women in the Temple; (b) the curtain that separated the Holy of Holies from the Holy inside the Temple sanctuary; (c) the spiritual fence of the Torah and its oral interpretations; (d) the sinful "flesh" that formerly separated man from God; (e) a "cosmic barrier" consisting of a fusion of "the Torah given to Israel, the cosmic order or law of the universe, and the frosty grip of fate." Cf. H. Schlier, "Christus und die Kirche im Epheserbrief," 18–26. Cf. also Abbott, *The Epistles to the Ephesians and to the Colossians*, 61; Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 141; Best, *Ephesians*, 253–57.

community, in Ephesians it is the universal Church as a corporate entity that has become the "holy Temple in the Lord."[280]

Unity is thus expressed using Temple language (Jews and Gentiles now have common access to the Father in the spiritual Temple that is the Church), and body language (all members of the Church are the members of the same Body whose head is Christ). Yet unity finds its fullest and strongest expression in the language of love, of which it is the natural fruit, and most especially in the metaphor of the "one flesh" union in marriage. This theme regroups together all of the aforementioned ones, namely, the consecration of the Church/Temple/bride for the purpose of sanctification, rooted in a permanent covenantal bond of love, and fully expressed in humble self-sacrifice. This makes it a fitting point to turn now to the text which most explicitly depicts the marriage between Christ and the Church in Ephesians and in the New Testament.

4.6.2 *One Flesh: Eph 5:22–33*

The richest and most significant nuptial passage of the New Testament is Eph 5:22–33, which speaks of the relationship between husbands and wives as a relationship to be modeled on the love of Christ for the Church.[281] This is not a simple allegorical exhortation, as if Paul were providing husbands with the ideal example of Christ's love for the Church as a kind of inspiring, utopian, mythological model for them to imitate as they feebly struggle with the less than heavenly daily challenges of married life. As Lincoln notes, Paul is presenting the union between Christ, the heavenly bridegroom, and the Church, his bride as "the standard and *prototype* for the writer's instructions about human marriage" and "the *archetype* for human marriage, the 'one flesh' relationship between husband and wife."[282] In other words, the relationship between earthly and heavenly love is not only metaphorical or allegorical: it is *metaphysical*. In Chavasse's words, the writer "is arguing from the Heavenly Marriage to human marriages, not vice versa; he is seeing the human in the

280 Gärtner (*The Temple and the Community*, 60–66) shows how the image of the Church as heavenly city and heavenly house, or as earthly community joined to the angelic world, is paralleled in 4QFlor and other Qumran texts.

281 For studies on Eph 5:22–33, cf. Mussner, *Christus das All und die Kirche;* Cambier, "Le Grand Mystère concernant le Christ et son Église: Eph. 5:22–33"; Muirhead, *The Bride of Christ*; Sampley, *And the Two Shall Become One Flesh*; Miletic, *"One Flesh": Eph. 5:22–24, 5:31: Marriage and the New Creation*; C. Osiek, "The Bride of Christ (Eph 5:22–33): A Problematic Wedding" in Nissinen, M. and Uro, R., ed. *Sacred Marriages: The Divine-Human Sexual Metaphor from Sumer to Early Christianity*, 371–92.

282 Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 352, 362, emphasis mine.

light of the heavenly, and therefore will have the human model itself on the heavenly."[283]

The pericope could be summarized as follows: it opens with a description of the hierarchy of subordination by which the husband is head of the wife as Christ is head of the Church – and somehow "savior of the body." This hierarchy is not one of domination but of sacrificial love: the headship of the man is to be exercised in the same way as Christ did when he "loved the Church and gave himself for her." The ultimate purpose of his self-gift is the sanctification and purification of his Church/bride. Cultic language is employed in the description of the glorious Church "not having spot or wrinkle" and called to be "holy and without blemish." This spotless condition, obviously unrealistic to expect of any community made of fallible humans of flesh and blood, points to an eschatological hope for the perfection of the Church and bride. Her full identification with her husband is even more strongly emphasized when she is described as the husband's own body and flesh, to be nourished and cherished in the same way as Christ nourishes and cherishes the Church. This leads up to the climax in a citation of Gen 2:24, expressing the "great mystery" of the one-flesh union between man and woman, which in fact speaks of Christ and the Church. Since they are truly one, the final exhortation to the husband to "love his own wife as himself" becomes almost self-evident.

4.6.3 *Echoes of Ezekiel and the Song of Songs*

The *hieros gamos* of Ephesians shows an obvious affinity and continuity with the marriage symbolism depicted by the OT prophets. Yet there are also some differences, three of which are worth mentioning here (as suggested by Barth):[284]

1) The covenant in the OT is a "national" one between YHWH and Israel exclusively, whereas the covenant in Ephesians is "international," between the Messiah and the Church, composed of Jews and Gentiles.
2) Human grooms in the OT typically pay a price for acquiring a woman.[285] But there is no evident "price" that the divine Bridegroom YHWH is compelled to pay for the acquisition of his bride Israel. The situation is very different in Ephesians: the Messiah loves his bride so much that he is

283 Chavasse, *The Bride of Christ*, 77. Cf. also Barth, *Ephesians 4–6*, 622.

284 Cf. Barth, *Ephesians 4–6*, 670–72.

285 Cf. Gen 34:12; 1 Sam 18:20–27; Ruth 4:1–7; Hos 3:2, Isa 43:3–4.

willing to lay down his life for her.[286] He purchased the Church with his own blood.[287]

3) In the OT prophets, YHWH occasionally appears as a bigamous husband, married to the two sisters Israel and Judah, viz. Oholah-Samaria and Oholibah-Jerusalem.[288] He is at times so disgusted by their sins and idolatry that he threatens them with divorce; indeed, Jeremiah has God declaring to Israel: "I had put her away and given her a certificate of divorce."[289] In Ephesians, however, we see only an indissoluble and monogamous relationship to a 'resplendent' Bride. The Church's temporary imperfections are overlooked and transformed by the Bridegroom's own perfect sanctity. The radiant eschatological vision of the perfected bride has wiped away all of her former faults, and there is no longer any thought of divorce. At the same time, the mystical marriage in Ephesians does not imply that the Jews have been divorced from God, but it presupposes, rather, the enduring validity and continuation of the covenant with Israel, in which the gentiles now also have a part.

Sampley has convincingly demonstrated that certain features of the *hieros gamos* of Eph 5:21–33 can be traced directly to two of the main witnesses to God's marriage to Israel in the OT, namely Ezekiel 16 and the Song of Songs.[290] We recall how Ezek 16:8 depicts the Lord passing by Jerusalem and tenderly looking upon her. Finding her at "the time of love" (עֵת דֹּדִים), he declares: "I swore an oath to you and entered into a covenant with you, and you became mine" – with the expression וָאָבוֹא בִבְרִית אֹתָךְ surely intending to depict a betrothal.[291] The washing of water that follows (וָאֶרְחָצֵךְ בַּמַּיִם) would then signify a pre-nuptial bridal bath, whereby the husband purifies the bride whom he has just acquired through a solemn oath and covenantal bond. This reveals a close affinity with Eph 5:26, which also depicts the bridegroom as washing his bride with (baptismal?) water (καθαρίσας τῷ λουτρῷ τοῦ ὕδατος). Sampley points out another resemblance between Ezekiel and Ephesians in their common concern to set forth the bride's perfect splendor, purity and beauty: In Ezek 16:8–14, the Lord lovingly bestows glorious beauty upon his bride Jerusalem, who becomes renown among the nations: וַיֵּצֵא לָךְ שֵׁם בַּגּוֹיִם בְּיָפְיֵךְ:

286 Eph 2:13–18; 5:2; 5:25; cf. John 15:13; 10:11–16.

287 Eph 1:7; 2:13; cf. 1 Cor 7:23, 1 Pet 1:18–19.

288 Cf. Jer 3:6–14; Ezek 23.

289 Jer 3:8; cf. Isa 50:1; Ezek 23:18.

290 Cf. Sampley, *And the Two Shall Become One Flesh*, 38–49.

291 Cf. above, p. 13 n. 29.

כִּי כָלִיל הוּא בַּהֲדָרִי אֲשֶׁר-שַׂמְתִּי עָלַיִךְ (16:14). Likewise, in Ephesians 5, the Church is depicted as perfect and "glorious" or "in splendor" (ἔνδοξον τὴν ἐκκλησίαν), which may well reflect the כָלִיל בַּהֲדָרִי of Ezek 16:14. These parallels lead Sampley to conclude:

> Thus Eph. 5:25–7 has close affinity to Ezek. 16:8ff. in that both reflect a hieros gamos (YHWH-Jerusalem, Christ-church) in which the groom cleanses his bride by a washing with water and in which the result is a strong emphasis on the beauty and purity of the bride. Here is the first clear evidence that behind the Ephesian verses is the pattern of YHWH's marriage to Israel-Jerusalem as the basis for the understanding of the relation of Christ and the church.[292]

Sampley also argues that the nuptial symbolism of Eph 5:21–33 "stands in a mediating position between the early Church Fathers and Ezekiel-Song of Songs,"[293] testifying to the transition it underwent in Christian thought from referring to YHWH and Israel to Christ and the Church. The Song of Songs of course abounds in references to the rhapsodic love between bridegroom and bride, and to the unsurpassed beauty and splendor of the latter, repeatedly called 'beautiful' (יָפָה), 'fairest among women'(הַיָּפָה בַּנָּשִׁים), and 'my perfect one' (תַּמָּתִי).[294] The parallel between the Canticle and Ephesians 5 regarding the bride's perfection becomes particularly visible when Cant 4:7[295] is compared with Eph 5:27: "that he might present the Church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish (ἄμωμος)." In both texts, a positive statement of the bride's beauty and splendor is followed by a privative one noting the absence of מוּם/μῶμος in her perfection. Sampley concludes by affirming that

> a definite relationship of dependence existed between Ephesians and the YHWH-Israel hieros gamos of Ezekiel and the Song of Songs. Ezekiel and Song of Songs show greatest affinity to Ephesians in their emphasis on

292 Sampley, *And the Two Shall Become One Flesh*, 43. On the relationship between Ezek 16 and Eph 5, along with Sumerian parallels of pre-marital washing, adornment, and marriage of the bride, cf. pp. 38–45.

293 Sampley, *And the Two*, 45–46.

294 Cf. Cant 1:8, 1:15, 2:10–13, 4:1, 4:7, 5:9, 6:1, 7:7 (יָפָה); 5:2, 6:9 (תַּמָּתִי).

295 "You are all fair, my love, and there is no spot in you" (כֻּלָּךְ יָפָה רַעְיָתִי וּמוּם אֵין בָּךְ; LXX: ὅλη καλὴ εἶ ἡ πλησίον μου καὶ μῶμος οὐκ ἔστιν ἐν σοί).

> the bride's beauty and the groom's love for the bride, the betrothal of the bride and related washing in water.[296]

4.6.4 *Authority and Submission, Love and Sacrifice* (*Eph 5:22–25*)

Because of the central importance of Eph 5:21–33 to our topic, it is worth examining it in greater detail by means of a verse-by-verse exegesis.

> [22] Wives, be subject to your husbands, as to the Lord. [23] For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the Church, his body, and is himself its Savior. [24] As the Church is subject to Christ, so let wives also be subject in everything to their husbands.

The pericope begins with the topic of the wife's subordination to her husband as a reflection of the Church's subordination to Christ. As mentioned, the image of Christ as head and of Church as body is a recurring theme in Ephesians: in 1:22–23 Christ is described as the "head over all things to the Church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all." In 4:12–16, we read how his body is edified through the synergy of its members' loving service to one another. By "speaking the truth in love," believers "may grow up in all things into Him who is the head – Christ." In this way they effect the unity of the body and cause it to grow "for the edifying of itself in love." By inserting themselves into the Church, Christians become a part of the same living organism, akin to the cells in a body.[297] We have encountered the theme of wife-husband subordination in 1 Corinthians 11 and noted how it derived from the original order of creation of man and woman as described in the second chapter of Genesis.[298] The subordination of wives to their husbands in both Pauline texts could be an implicit echo of the original subordination that became the fate of Eve after her fall: "Your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you" (Gen 3:16). But unlike the Genesis text, the hierarchical relationship described in 1 Corinthians and Ephesians is no longer one of oppression or domination, or a *carte blanche* for male chauvinism. Quite on the contrary, they are an imperative to sacrificial love. Recalling that in 1 Cor 11:7, woman is "the glory of man" who is himself "the image and glory of God," in Ephesians it

296 Sampley, *And the Two*, p. 49. Sampley also sees, to a lesser degree, a relationship between the Ephesian *hieros gamos* and the royal Psalm 45 (cf. pp. 49–51).

297 1 Cor 12:12–27 provides the most complete passage describing the unity and diversity of the members of the body of Christ, literally compared to the different members of a human body (cf. above, p. 200). Cf. also Rom 12:4–5.

298 Cf. above, pp. 199–200.

is the man who bears the greater responsibility in his vocation to love his wife selflessly as Christ "loved the Church and gave himself up for her."

> [25] Husbands, love (ἀγαπᾶτε) your wives, as Christ loved (ἠγάπησεν) the Church and gave himself up for her

The exhortation to self-sacrifice and service for the sake of the beloved, in imitation of Christ, is at the heart of the Gospel's message.[299] In Ephesians alone, the words ἀγάπη, ἀγαπητός and the verb ἀγαπάω occur no less than 19 times, either describing Christ's unsurpassable love for the Church or the love by which Christians are called to love him and each other in return, in *imitatio Christi*.[300] Eph 5:25 seems to return to the line of thought that was initiated in 5:1–2, where the Ephesians are called to be "imitators of God as dear children" and to "walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma."[301] Christ's self-gift for the sake of the Church takes here the distinct look and smell of Temple sacrifices with the expressions προσφορά καὶ θυσία (cf. LXX Ps 39:6) and εἰς ὀσμὴν εὐωδίας (cf. LXX Exod 29:18; Ezek 20:41). Similar sacrificial language is used to describe the gifts that the Philippians sent to Paul, called "a sweet-smelling aroma, an acceptable sacrifice (ὀσμὴν εὐωδίας, θυσίαν δεκτήν), well pleasing to God" (Phil 4:18). The same expression is also alluded to in 2 Cor 2:14–16 to denote all Christians: "we are to God the fragrance of Christ" (Χριστοῦ εὐωδία ἐσμὲν τῷ θεῷ).[302] Elsewhere, Paul's sacrificial labor of love is described as the outpouring of a drink offering, using unmistakably liturgical language: "I am being poured out as a drink offering on the sacrifice and service of your faith" (σπένδομαι ἐπὶ τῇ θυσίᾳ καὶ λειτουργίᾳ τῆς πίστεως ὑμῶν) (Phil 2:17). The same expression is used in 2 Tim 4:6 in the context of the author's impending death, figuratively described as a libation upon the altar: "For I am already being poured out as a drink offering (σπένδομαι), and the time of my departure is at hand." We thus see the language of Temple offering

299 The idea is common to a number of NT traditions: Cf. Matt 22:37–39; John 3:16, 10:17, 13:34–35, 14:15, 21; 15:10–13, 17:26, 21:15–19; Rom 5:8, 8:35–39, 12:10; 1 Cor 13; 2 Cor 2:4, 9:7; Gal 5:13–14; Phil 2:2; 1 Pet 1:22; 1 John 3:1; 4:7–10, 16–19.

300 Cf. Eph 1:4, 6, 15; 2:4; 3:17, 19; 4:2, 15–16, 5:1–2, 25, 28, 33; 6:23–24.

301 Some manuscripts switch the order of the words ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν προσφορὰν καὶ θυσίαν ("for us as an offering and sacrifice") to ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν θυσίαν καὶ προσφορὰν or προσφορὰν ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν καὶ θυσίαν.

302 On this verse and its relationship to the liturgical fragrance of Lady Wisdom, cf. above, p. 206.

and sacrifice used in several epistles to describe the Pauline understanding of ἀγάπη in action: Christ provides the model (Eph 5:2) to be imitated by his followers, whose gifts (Phil 4:18), works and sufferings (Phil 2:17), their very person (2 Cor 2:14) and death (2 Tim 4:6) are all portrayed as offerings presented before God and pleasing to Him. This is the extent of the calling to husbands to sacrificially love their wives "as Christ loved the Church."

4.6.5 *Excursus: Sacrifice as Means to Communion*

4.6.5.1 The Symbolism of Sacrifice

This is a fitting place to open an excursus on the meaning of Temple sacrifices in order to better understand the Pauline use of liturgical and sacrificial language as applied to the love between Christ and his disciples. Rabbi Joshua Berman provides valuable insights on the connections between covenant, love, and sacrifice within the context of the Temple service. He explains how sacrifice was viewed in the ancient world as a "bilateral process," whereby the owner of the animal to be sacrificed had to "*renounce* his ownership of the animal so that the gods could *receive* the animal in his place."[303] These two aspects were taken up in the biblical notion of sacrifice in the Sanctuary, along with the idea that a sacrifice is קדוש – sanctified, dedicated and set apart for God. An animal dedicated for the purpose of being offered as a sacrifice is therefore designated as *hekdesh* (הקדש) – something made holy.[304] Sacrifice thus meant abnegation, renunciation, and forfeiture for the owner. When an animal was brought into the Temple for sacrifice, the owner renounced his claim over it and could no longer use it for his personal benefit. At the same time, the smoke and smell of the animal burnt on the altar, rising to heaven, was received by YHWH as pleasing to Him, a "sweet savor to the Lord" (רֵיחַ-נִיחוֹחַ לַה'). Yet the main connotation of sacrifice (קרבן) in the Bible goes beyond the ideas of renunciation, gift and acceptance. The root of the word קרבן is ק.ר.ב. which means "close." A קרבן is therefore "that which has been brought close," something that has come into God's presence in the Sanctuary, and offering a sacrifice (להקריב קרבן) means literally "to bring the sacrifice close." The ultimate purpose of the קרבנות, therefore, is to draw God's people close and bring them into communion with Him.

Sacrifices are also symbols of repentance, whereby the gap between God and man caused by sin is bridged by the atoning death of the animal and the shedding of its blood. Sin is incompatible with God's presence,[305] and its

303 Berman, *The Temple*, 115. Emphasis in original.

304 Berman, *The Temple*, 116.

305 Cf. Deut 31:17–18; Ps 32:1–5; Isa 59:1–2; Ezek 23:18.

consequence is death.[306] By offering sacrifices, man overcomes the alienation and attendant death sentence which sin has brought upon him. This is done by transferring not only his sins onto the animal that is to be sacrificed, but also his own identity through the act of *semikhah* – laying hands on the animal's head and "leaning" on it. It is a symbolic act of investiture: The animal becomes representative of its owner, and the offering of the sacrifice is "an execution in effigy" with a rehabilitative purpose: "As he stands before God in the Temple and witnesses his own execution by proxy for sins he committed, the owner of the offering is meant to reach a new awareness of his obligations to God so that his breach will not be repeated."[307] The rites of the *korbanot* are thus *punitive measures* that the owner should view as carried out on his own body. By burning and obliterating the animal, he "eradicates the element of his sinful persona that exhibited animalism rather than humanity."[308] The slaughter of the animal, the shedding and sprinkling of its blood, and the annihilation of its body in the flames was no doubt a stark pedagogical experience that was also *purgative* and *cathartic*, deepening the owner's conversion and strengthening his resolve not to sin again.

The different kinds of sacrifices carry various meanings. Three of them are symbols of penitence: The *sin-offering* (חטאת) represents a purifying or cleansing of the spiritual defilement that has been engendered by sin.[309] The *guilt-offering* (אשם) carries the connotation of indemnity, reparation

306 Cf. Gen 2:7; 3:19; 6:5–7; Exod 31:14–15; 32:33–34; Lev 20.

307 Berman, *The Temple*, 118–19. Nachmanides, in his commentary on Lev 1:9, sheds light on the identification of the sinner with the sacrificed animal: "[The owner] should burn the innards and the kidneys [of the offering] in fire because they are the instruments of thought and desire in the human being. He should burn the legs since they correspond to the hands and feet of a person, which do all his work. He should sprinkle the blood upon the altar, which is analogous to the blood in his body. All these acts are performed in order that when they are done, a person should realize that he has sinned against God with his body and his soul, and that "his" blood should really be spilled and "his" body burned, were it not for the loving-kindness of the Creator, Who took from him a substitute and a ransom, namely this offering, so that its blood should be in place of his blood, its life in place of his life, and that the chief limbs of the offering should be in place of the chief parts of his body."

308 Berman, *The Temple*, 120.

309 לחטא means "to purify" in the Torah (cf. Lev 8:15; 14:49; Num 19:9). Nachmanides (on Lev 4:2) is instructive regarding the purifying role of the חטאת: "The reason for the offerings for the erring soul is that all sins [even if committed unwittingly] produce a particular 'stain' upon the soul and constitute a blemish thereon, and the soul is only worthy to be received by the countenance of its Creator when it is pure of all sin. It is for this reason that the erring soul brings an offering, through which it becomes worthy of approaching

payment, repairing damage, and making restitution. The *whole burnt offering* (עולה), in turn, signifies a complete dedication to God.[310] The role of the blood sprinkled on and around the altar is also significant. Since the blood symbolizes the soul (cf. Lev 17:11), the animal's blood not only represents the blood of the owner but also his soul. Thus the sprinkling of the blood upon the altar may symbolize "not the forfeiture of the owner's life, but the rededication of his soul in concert with the rest of his being" to God.[311] Sacrifices were also covenantal gestures that rededicated the covenant between God and His people. The covenant at Sinai was sealed by the shedding and sprinkling of blood (Exod 24:3–8), which signified the depth of mutual commitment between the two parties, and the covenant of circumcision is also characterized by the shedding of blood. The associations of this symbolism with the forming of the New Covenant through Christ's blood are well known.

This discussion helps us to understand how "Christ loved the Church and gave himself up for her" within the context of the Temple. When Paul depicts Christ as sacrifice of the New Covenant, he also recapitulates in him the different roles of the Temple sacrifices: Christ purchased His Bride with his own blood (Eph 1:7; 2:13)[312] for the purpose of atoning for her sins, making reparation and restitution for them, purifying and sanctifying her, and above all proving his complete dedication and love to her. Yet his sacrifice was also necessary to render possible the union and communion with his bride. This is best understood in light of the sacrifice that restores and symbolizes communion with God: the *zevach* (זבח), which most often appears in the Bible as a covenantal feast centered around the consumption of meat (cf. 1 Sam 28:24; 1 Kgs 1:9; 19:21). In its sacrificial context, it is a shared meal that ritualizes the formation of a bond between two parties[313] or celebrates its ongoing renewal, accompanied by the presentation of loaves of bread and wine.[314]

'unto God who gave it.'" (quoted in Berman, *The Temple*, 121–22). See Berman's discussion on the three sacrifices of penitence, 120–24.

310 Abraham was commanded to offer Isaac as עולה as the ultimate sign of his devotion to the service of God, whom he trusted and loved to the point of being willing to offer up "his son, his only son Isaac whom he loved" (Gen 22:2). Abraham proved his love by the greatness and totality of his sacrifice.

311 Berman, *The Temple*, 125.

312 Cf. also 1 Cor 7:23; 1 Pet 1:18–19.

313 Some examples are found in Gen 26:28–30; 31:44–46, 54.

314 Here too Berman (*The Temple*, 130) is enlightening: "The Temple . . . is the focal point for the commemoration of the *brit* – the covenant between God and the Jewish people. Moreover . . . the covenant is dynamic and is renewed and rejuvenated on an ongoing basis. As the Jewish people continually rededicate themselves as covenantal partners, the

The *zevach* recalled the original bond made between God and Israel at Sinai, where Moses mediated to the people the ordinances of the Torah (Exod 24:3), the people solemnly vowed their obedience (vv. 3, 7), burnt-offerings (עֹלֹת) and peace-offerings (זִבְחֵי שְׁלָמִים) were offered (v. 5), the covenant was sealed by the sprinkling of blood on the altar and on the people (vv. 6, 8), and Moses, Aaron, Nadab, Abihu and the seventy elders went up on the mountain where they "beheld God, and they ate and drank" (v. 9). This covenant ceremony was immediately followed by the coming of the glory of the Lord in the form of the cloud (vv. 15–18). The close intimacy between God and Israel at Sinai was thus enacted by the sacrifice of *olot* (signifying complete dedication between the two parties) and the offering and eating of *zevachim* (signifying intimate communion between them). The *zevach* is thus an experience where "man, literally, and God, figuratively, partake of the same feast."[315]

It is also significant that the offering of every *korban* included the presentation of loaves and wine. The bread of the presence (לחם הפנים) in the sanctuary attests to the idea that communion with God is attained by "eating with Him" and that eating is the most hallowed form of worship.[316] We can see how this concept would easily have developed into the sharing of the Eucharistic bread and wine as highest and most intimate form of communion with the incarnate Christ. This is perhaps one of the allusions of Eph 5:29 where it is said that the Lord "nourishes and cherishes" the Church, his bride and his own flesh.

In short, the *korbanot* are sanctified and dedicated gifts to God, expiatory symbols (especially the חטאת and אשם) symbolizing punishment, providing atonement and forgiveness, purifying sin and making reparation for it, and calling to conversion. They are also symbols of covenantal feasting (עולה and זבח שלמים) whose ultimate purpose is to draw man close to God, bringing the human into the presence of the divine and into intimate communion with

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notion of *korban* as *zevach* comes into play. The *korbanot* are an expression of a universal convention between partners to a *brit*. As the Jewish people continually rededicate themselves to their Covenantal Partner, they bring *zevachim* to the covenantal center to symbolize through celebratory feasts the rejuvenation of the bond between them. Classically, a true feast included wine. With this in mind, the analogy of *korban* as feast is further buttressed by the requirement that the offering of every *korban* include the presentation of loaves and wine (Numbers 15:1–14)."

315 Berman, *ibid*. The psalmist attests that the forming of the covenant between God and Israel was accomplished by offering and partaking of a *zevach*: "Gather My saints together unto Me; those that have made a covenant with Me by sacrifice" (כֹּרְתֵי בְרִיתִי עָלֵי-זָבַח) (Ps 50:5).

316 On the לחם הפנים see Berman, *The Temple*, 136–38.

Him. Keeping this symbolism in mind helps us to better grasp the enormous implications of the husband's calling to love his wife "as Christ loved the Church" by sacrificially giving himself for her as "an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma."

4.6.5.2 On Love and Death

Given our nuptial context, it is worth adding a few words on the relationship between sacrifice and love, and how the element of self-renunciation and death that is inseparable from every animal sacrifice symbolizes the owner's total self-gift to his Maker. The Mishnah comments on the injunction of the *Shema* to love God with one's entire being (Deut 6:5):

> A person must praise [God] for bad things just as for good things, as it is said "And you must love God with all your heart, soul and might." 'With all your heart' – with your two inclinations, the good inclination and the evil inclination; 'soul' – even when God takes your soul from you; 'might' – your property. (*m. Berakhot* 9:5)

Fishbane notes how the Mishnah's exhortation to love God with both one's good and evil inclinations implies the sublimation of both base instincts to divine ends, whereby the inner division of the two impulses is brought in line in a wholehearted and total devotion to God. The duty of loving God with all of one's soul, in turn, means "even if He takes your soul." Love of God is thus a total commitment, even unto death.[317] The commentary on the *Shema* in the *Tosefta* and *Sifre* supplement the Mishnah with a verse that is often used in martyrological contexts: "for Your sake we are killed all day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter" (Ps 44:22).[318] The Sages have raised the question as to how one can be killed "all day long." One answer is that "the Holy One, blessed be He, regards the righteous as if they are killed every day."[319] This may be seen as a kind of martyrdom "in installments" whereby the righteous "kills" his evil inclination and evil heart in a constant act of self-mortification and sacrifice of his base desires for God's sake.[320]

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317 As Fishbane states (*The Kiss of God*, 126): "Heavenly love is activated by human death. Self-sacrifice thus stands at the heart of Being – a sacrament of love for the salvation of God."

318 *T. Zera'im* 6:7; *Sifre Deut 32; Mekh Shirata* 3. Cf. Fishbane, *The Kiss of God*, 6.

319 Rabbi Simeon ben Menasia, quoted in Fishbane, *The Kiss of God*, 6.

320 Fishbane (*The Kiss of God*, 8) summarizes: "Accordingly, if one regards martyrdom as the acceptance of death in extremis for the love of God . . . killing one's evil *yetzer* may correspondingly function as the daily exaction of such supreme devotion. Psychological strife

For mystics like Paul, to be "at home in the body" means to be "absent from the Lord" (2 Cor 5:6), and this is the motivation for martyrdom: A willing death for God is not only the ultimate sacrifice of love to Him but also the quickest way to the consummation of the mystical union with Him.[321] But if martyrdom is the highest expression of love for God, it remains an occasion that occurs only in exceptional circumstances, and few are those who *joyfully* choose that path. In normal circumstances, when the supreme act of martyrdom is not an option, various forms of ritual simulation and substitution represent and symbolize the person's death for God in a more digestible way for common mortals who have not yet attained such mystical insights as to long for death for the sake of union with God. The biblical sacrifices are the most evident form of ritual substitution whereby a person could, so to speak, "practice death."[322] Reconciliation and union with God are accomplished through sacrifice because of its cost to the owner. His renunciation of something of great value to him is symbolic of his own self-renunciation, self-denial, and death. The essence of sin is a disordered self-love whereby a person places his own desires first, even to the point of disobeying God and forsaking His commandments. Sacrifice reverses this process and counters human egoism by the forsaking of costly goods and offering them as dedicated gifts to God in humble obedience.

The animal is thus a symbolic substitute of the owner's own self-offering to God. The shedding of the animal's blood and consumption of its body in the flames are a substitute for the death that he should have incurred by his transgression of God's commandments. Free-will offerings and sacrifices of communion are of even higher value precisely because they are optional gifts, gratuitously offered to God out of selfless generosity.

Death can seem like "the limit of love on earth"[323] and the ultimate enemy of love. The earthly love between two spouses can be suddenly terminated by the death of one of them. Yet love can also "die" while both spouses are still alive. The hardships of life, along with one's own goals, ambitions, and desires can easily come into conflict with the romance, care, devotion and

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thus provides the drama of personal perfection, and slaying the evil inclination is the perpetual combat whereby the devotee offers "all" his soul to God."

321 Cf. Phil 1:21–23. Fishbane (*The Kiss of God*, 11) cites a prayer for the Day of Atonement which expresses the same idea: "O Lord! . . . when I am far from You – my life is death; and were I to cleave to You – my death would be life."

322 On the forms of ritual simulation and substitution of death and their development in Judaism, see chapter 3 in Fishbane, *The Kiss of God: "As if he sacrificed a soul" – Forms of Ritual Simulation and Substitution*, 87–124.

323 See Barth's discussion on love and death in *Ephesians 4–6*, 684–87.

attention for the beloved that love requires. A person willing to bear hardships and sufferings, forsaking his own desires for the sake of the beloved, has demonstrated his/her love in a tangible way. When human love is not sustained by self-sacrifice and self-gift, however, it runs the risk of weakening, waning and dying. If this happens while spouses are still alive – death has won over love. The former lovers continue to live, but their love has died. Such a love that has fizzled out is in a sense more dead than one that was interrupted by natural death and in which the memory of happy love lives on. On the other hand, love that prevails "till death do us part" is in fact the victory of love over death. When lovers withstand all sufferings and trials until the end of earthly life, when death is the only thing that is able to separate them, then death is in fact defeated by its own apparent victory; love has prevailed over it – a "love stronger than death" to use the language of the Song of Songs. This is the love of Christ for the Church that that NT authors typically describe: "Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends" (John 15:13). Jesus demonstrated his love for his bride by his death, bearing all suffering, humiliation, and abandonment until the bitter end. Precisely for this reason, nothing, not even death, can separate the Church from her divine Bridegroom.[324]

4.6.5.3 In *Imitatio Christi*

This is the type of sacrificial love that husbands should imitate for the sake of their brides. It would presumably involve a long and arduous process of "practicing death" in self-denial, self-mortification and *kenosis* (self-emptying) in imitation of Christ.[325] The language of Eph 5:25, calling husbands to love their wives "as Christ loved the Church and gave himself for her," is also reminiscent of Gal 2:20, where Paul extols Christ's very personal love for him and, full of gratitude, offers in return his own life so that it no longer belongs to him but to his master who "lives in him." Though no nuptial metaphor is employed here, all of its elements are present: the covenantal bond of love, the sacrificial gift of self by the "greater" party, the passionate response and self-surrender of the "lesser" party, and the union of flesh and spirit between them resulting in a genuine exchange of persons whereby each offers and dedicates his life to the other. The imitation of Christ and full identification with him in sacrificial love for the Church is also expressed in Col 1:24. Here Paul sees himself as a kind of *alter Christus*: by taking part in the

324 Cf. Rom 8:37–39. Fishbane (*The Kiss of God*, 104) provides the same insight from a Jewish perspective: "Self-sacrifice thus stands in the center of world-restorative actions, actually replacing the ancient Temple as the site of ritual at-one-ment."

325 Cf. Phil 2:3, 6–8; Col 3:5.

Messiah's afflictions he somehow shares in his redemptive role for the sake of his ecclesial body. If these passages place the bar very high as to the sacrificial quality required of the husband's love for his wife – or of the Christian's self-gift to Christ for the sake of the Church – all emphatically affirm that such self-less gift is only possible "with Christ," "in Christ," and inasmuch as "Christ lives in me" (Gal 2:20).[326] Lincoln notes that the καθώς in Eph 5:25 ("Husbands, love your wives, just as (καθώς) Christ also loved the church") is not only comparative but also causal: "Christ's love for the Church not only presents the model but also provides the grounds for the husband's love for his wife."[327]

One last Pauline passage compares the Christians life with the Temple offerings:

> I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God (θυσίαν ζῶσαν ἁγίαν εὐάρεστον τῷ θεῷ) – this is your spiritual act of worship (τὴν λογικὴν λατρείαν ὑμῶν). (Rom 12:1)

The word λατρεία, used here to denote the offering of one's body as living sacrifice, can mean "the state of a hired laborer, service" or "the service and worship of God according to the requirements of the Levitical law."[328] In the OT the word denotes the commemoration of the Passover (LXX Exod 12:25–26; 13:5), the offering of sacrifices (LXX Josh 22:27), or the work of the priests and Levites in the Temple (1 Chr 28:13; cf. Heb 9:1, 6).[329] All believers are thus to offer up their lives as living and spiritual sacrifices for their Lord, in a way reminiscent of the Temple sacrifices and in imitation of Christ's own sacrifice (cf. Eph 5:2).

4.6.5.4 Eros and Agape

A final word should be said regarding the use of the verb ἀγαπάω to denote the love between husband and wife in Eph 5:25. Barth notes that this is practically the only occurrence in the NT where ἀγαπάω also includes the sexual union

326 The equivalent Johannine idea would be the metaphor of the branches abiding in Jesus the true vine (John 15:5).

327 Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 374. Cf. also Barth, *Ephesians*, 622: "According to 5:2 Christ's death is not only the example but also the sacrament ('sacrifice') of love which creates the 'way' and guides the saints on the way of love which they are to follow."

328 Liddell-Scott, *Greek Lexicon*; Thayer, *Greek-English Lexicon of the NT*.

329 A variant of this theme is found in 1 Pet 2:5, where (as in Ephesians) the collective Church and not just the individual Christian forms God's "spiritual house." Peter takes up the roles of Temple, priesthood and sacrifice that are elsewhere attributed to Christ, and he transfers them to the Church, in good Pauline fashion.

by which a man and a woman become 'one flesh.'[330] While the NT writers frequently make use of the words ἀγαπάω and ἀγάπη, they completely avoid ἐράομαι and ἔρος (referring to sexual love or desire). This is presumably for the sake of emphasizing the attitude and acts of selfless giving, in contrast to the lustful use of a person for the purpose of self-gratification. The high view of the "one-flesh" union in Ephesians, however, categorically rules out any Platonic or Gnostic denigration of the body and the sexual union in marriage.[331]

Tying this long discussion back to its starting point (Eph 5:25), Christ first loved the Church with a total love encompassing both the passionate ἔρος of longing for and desiring union with his bride, and the unselfish ἀγάπη of total self-offering for the good of the beloved. This sacrifice of love takes up the entire symbolism of the Temple sacrifices, providing atonement, forgiveness, and purification, making reparation, calling to conversion, and restoring communion with God. At the same time, this love is the model, inspiration and source for the love that is asked of Christians in return, and most especially of husbands for their wives.

4.6.6 *Holy and without Blemish* (*Eph 5:26–27*)

> [26] that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word,

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330 On *agape*, *eros* and sex in Ephesians, see Barth, *Ephesians*, 621 n. 48; 715–20.

331 Pope Benedict XVI, in his Encyclical Letter *Deus Caritas Est* (7), provides helpful insight into the biblical relationship between ἔρος and ἀγάπη, opposing an alleged antithesis between a descending, oblative love (ἀγάπη) that would be typically Christian and an ascending, possessive or covetous love (ἔρος) that would be typical of Greek culture: "*Eros* and *agape* – ascending love and descending love – can never be completely separated. The more the two, in their different aspects, find a proper unity in the one reality of love, the more the true nature of love in general is realized. Even if *eros* is at first mainly covetous and ascending, a fascination for the great promise of happiness, in drawing near to the other, it is less and less concerned with itself, increasingly seeks the happiness of the other, is concerned more and more with the beloved, bestows itself and wants to "be there for" the other. The element of *agape* thus enters into this love, for otherwise *eros* is impoverished and even loses its own nature. On the other hand, man cannot live by oblative, descending love alone. He cannot always give, he must also receive. Anyone who wishes to give love must also receive love as a gift. Certainly, as the Lord tells us, one can become a source from which rivers of living water flow (cf. John 7:37–38). Yet to become such a source, one must constantly drink anew from the original source, which is Jesus Christ, from whose pierced heart flows the love of God (cf. John 19:34)."

Returning now to our exegesis of Eph 5, verse 26 tells us that the ultimate purpose and goal of sacrificial love is the sanctification of the beloved bride – the Church. Returning to the subject of קדושה, Sampley, following Kuhn,[332] reminds us that in rabbinic literature the Hebrew term for "sanctify" (לקדש) expresses the action of betrothal and means "to espouse a wife." The ἁγιάζω of Eph 5:26 would therefore mean not only 'set apart' but also 'set apart for wife.'[333] Moreover, the Church is sanctified "by the washing of water with the word." We have discussed how this washing of water recalls Ezekiel's metaphor of YHWH entering his marriage covenant with Jerusalem, where he bathes her with water, washes off the blood from her and anoints her with oil. In this light, the "washing of water" of Ephesians may well be an allusion to a pre-nuptial bridal bath in preparation for the bride's union with the bridegroom.[334] The idea of sanctification through the washing of water as a metaphor of salvation also occurs in 1 Cor 6:11.[335] Most ancient, medieval and modern commentators agree that these passages are direct references to water baptism,[336] the "bridal bath" that precedes the entrance into the bridal chamber to meet with the bridegroom.

When did Christ sanctify and cleanse the Church? According to our context in Ephesians, this would have occurred either when he "gave himself up for

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332 Sampley, *And the Two*, pp. 42–43, 129; K.G. Kuhn, "The Concept of Holiness in Rabbinic Judaism," [*TDNT*, I, 98]. cf. *b. Qiddushin* 2a. Sampley shows how *b. Qiddushin* 41a displays many features related to Eph 5:21–33, including the use of קדש for betrothal in the same way as ἁγιάζω is used in Ephesians 5.

333 Lincoln (*Ephesians*, 375) tends to minimize the connection between ἁγιάζω and the nuptial sense of לקדש, which according to him was not "likely to have been in the writer's mind as a secondary allusion in terms of marital imagery." But such a split between sanctification and betrothal seems hard to believe given the etymological connection between the two terms, the importance of both motifs in Eph, and the nuptial context of Eph 5:21–33.

334 For supporters of the prenuptial bath allusion in Eph 5:26 see Abbott, 168–169; O. Casel, "Die Taufe als Brautbad der Kirche," [*Jahrbuch für Liturgie und Wissenschaft* 5 (1925)], 144–47; Dunn, *Baptism in the Holy Spirit* (London: SCM, 1970), 162–63; F.F. Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), 387; H. Halter, *Taufe und Ethos*, 282.

335 Cf. also Acts 22:16; Heb 10:22.

336 Cf. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 375; Abbott, *The Epistles to the Ephesians and to the Colossians*, 168–169. Barth, *Ephesians* (691–99) disagrees and questions the association of Eph 5:26 with baptism. Links have also been made between this verse and the ritual washing at Qumran (cf. 1QS 3:4, 8–10; 1QH 11:10–12).

her" or at the moment of the "washing of water" – that is, either at Christ's death or at the believer's baptism. It is probable that Paul refers to both events – the Messiah's universal act of redemptive death and its individual application to the baptized believer – since the two events are often related in Pauline theology (with baptism explicitly connected to Christ's death).[337] Baptism thus becomes the moment when the sanctification and cleansing attained by Christ's death are actualized and appropriated by individual Christians. And so Lincoln: "If Christ's death is the point in history at which his love was demonstrated, baptism is the point at which the Church experiences Christ's continuing purifying love for her as his bride."[338]

> [27] that he might present (ἵνα παραστήσῃ) the Church to himself in splendor (ἔνδοξον), without spot or wrinkle (μὴ ἔχουσαν σπίλον ἢ ῥυτίδα) or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish (ἁγία καὶ ἄμωμος).

We have discussed above the parallels between the splendor and beauty of the Church in Ephesians and the bride in Ezekiel and the Song of Songs. In addition, the present verse echoes other Pauline verses that reflect his ongoing concern for the purity of the Church, further revealing the interrelationship between the nuptial and Temple motifs. The verse seems to be a combination of 2 Cor 11:2–3 (which we have already examined) and Col 1:22:

> "For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ" (ἡρμοσάμην γὰρ ὑμᾶς ἑνὶ ἀνδρὶ παρθένον ἁγνὴν παραστῆσαι τῷ Χριστῷ). (2 Cor 11:2)

> "[Christ] has reconciled [you] in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy and blameless, and above reproach in His sight" (παραστῆσαι ὑμᾶς ἁγίους καὶ ἀμώμους καὶ ἀνεγκλήτους κατενώπιον αὐτοῦ). (Col 1:21–22)

All three passages use the verb παρίστημι to describe the presentation of the Church to Christ. They differ, however, in several respects, as Best has shown:

337 Cf. Rom 6:3ff; 1 Cor 1:13; Col 2:12; Heb 10:22; 1 John 1:7, 9; cf. Best, *Ephesians*, 542.

338 Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 375.

1. Only 2 Corinthians and Ephesians refer to the marriage of Christ and the Church. Colossians does not make use of the nuptial metaphor.
2. In 2 Corinthians it is Paul who presents the Church to Christ. In Ephesians and Colossians, Christ is the one who presents the Church to himself.
3. In 2 Corinthians, the bride is an individual congregation – the Corinthian community. In Ephesians, the bride is the universal Church. The words in Colossians are ambiguous: they seem to be addressed especially to the Colossian community, though the immediate context also refers to the universal Church (cf. 1:18–20).
4. 2 Corinthians "depicts a betrothal, the context is eschatological and the marriage is future at the parousia;" in Ephesians "the marriage is regarded as already in existence."[339] Consequently, the Church in 2 Corinthians is still a "chaste virgin" (παρθένος ἁγνή), whereas the Church in Ephesians is already Christ's wife. Though she is not described as ἁγνή, she is no less beautiful or pure, "splendid" (ἔνδοξον), "without spot or wrinkle" (μὴ ἔχουσαν σπίλον ἢ ῥυτίδα), and "holy and without blemish" (ἁγία καὶ ἄμωμος).

Christ will present the Church to himself "in splendor" (ἔνδοξος), that is, "resplendent" or "glorious." The word ἔνδοξος, which derives from δόξα, points again to the theme of God's glory: first revealed at Sinai in the form of a majestic cloud and consuming fire, radiating on Moses' face, filling the Tabernacle and later the Temple, leaving Jerusalem and appearing to Ezekiel in exile, the כבוד/δόξα of the *Shekhinah* is reinterpreted in the Johannine tradition as the λόγος who came to dwell in the new משכן and מקדש of Jesus' body, incarnated in his flesh, temporarily veiled by his humanity but revealed in his glorified body after the resurrection. For Paul, too, the δόξα is the crowning promise and gift of the New Covenant, as seen in 2 Corinthians: Christians are transformed "from glory to glory" into the likeness of the Lord, even if they must temporarily carry this treasure in the "earthen vessels" of their frail humanity, prone to suffering and death in imitation of their master. In light of the history of the δόξα among God's people, it becomes easier to imagine what Paul has in mind by the Church "glorious." This is but the final, eschatological, and realized goal of the transformation into divine glory, the unsurpassable δόξα that will

339 Best, *Ephesians*, 545.

radiate from God, through Christ, and in the Holy Spirit, into his splendid bride, the Church.[340]

The Church is also said to be "without spot or wrinkle" (μὴ ἔχουσαν σπίλον ἢ ῥυτίδα). These two words are rare. The word ῥυτίς ("wrinkle") does not appear elsewhere in the LXX or NT. The word σπίλος, denoting a stain, blemish, or possibly a skin or surface defect, occurs only in late Greek. It does not appear in the LXX and only in one other place in the NT (2 Pet 2:13).[341] Its privative ἄσπιλος (unblemished) appears in 1 Pet 1:19, referring to Christ who is "as of a lamb without blemish and without spot" (ὡς ἀμνοῦ ἀμώμου καὶ ἀσπίλου), and in 2 Pet 3:14, where the believers are exhorted to be found "without spot and blameless" (ἄσπιλοι καὶ ἀμώμητοι). In both these verses (as in Eph 5:27) the uncommon ἄσπιλος is used alongside the more common ἀμώμος. We have discussed the similarity of this word with the expression "there is no spot in you" (וּמוּם אֵין בָּךְ) of Cant 4:7, pointing to a probable textual relationship between both passages. Purity was prescribed and demanded of brides in the Torah (cf. Deut 24:1). In OT nuptial imagery, YHWH Himself provides the purity that He demands of His bride Jerusalem/Israel (cf. Ezek 16:9–14). This purity, both required of and bestowed on the bride by her divine Bridegroom, is inherited by the Church in the Epistle to the Ephesians.[342]

In addition, the expression ἁγία καὶ ἄμωμος of Eph 5:27 points to the cultic and ritual purity that was required of priests and sacrifices in the OT. Leviticus 21:17–23 specifies that any priest who has a blemish (מוּם) of any kind is unfit for divine service. Likewise, any animal with a blemish (מוּם) is

340 Barth (*Ephesians*, 681) illustrates this well: "Just as the brilliant sky around the sun reveals the presence and power of the sun, radiates light, creates brightness, and invites admiration, so the glory of God creates glorification and calls for it." He adds a four-fold description of the splendor attributed to the Messiah's Bride: "(a) a gift of God or the Messiah; (b) a transforming power, not just an imputation or a putative status; (c) an event making the church "conformed to the image" and "inseparable from the love of Christ" (Rom 8:29, 35); and (d) a demonstration that is not limited to the Bride, but may be reflected on a wider public – just like Moses' shining face." Cf. pp. 681–84 for Barth's complete discussion on ἔνδοξος.

341 The related verb σπιλόω appears in Jas 3:6 and Jude 23, meaning "defiling."

342 Cf. Sampley, *And the Two Shall Become One Flesh*, p. 70: "Thus, the purity prescribed for brides in ancient Israel's Torah became part of the YHWH-Israel *hieros gamos*. The author of Ephesians inherited this and developed it in application to the church as Christ's bride." Sampley also notes (72–73) how the purity requirements originally reserved for priests were extended to the entire community by the Qumran sect in a way that is "quite analogous to the purity expected on the part of all members of the church in Ephesians."

not acceptable for sacrifice.[343] The word מוּם (LXX μώμος) in the OT normally means a physical blemish, as in the case of priests and sacrifices, but it can also mean a moral fault.[344] Very often the word ἄμωμος is a translation of תָּמִים (complete, wholesome, undefiled, innocent, upright, perfect), a word used to describe both the physical perfection of animals to be sacrificed as well as the moral perfection of the righteous. The NT witnesses to the use of both meanings: ἄμωμος evokes the context of ritual purity and (especially) that of moral perfection.[345] Eph 5:27 therefore applies the OT concern for holiness and the language of Temple cultic purity that was applied to priests and sacrifices to the Messiah's bride, the Church.[346] Sampley notes a clear confluence of priestly traditions and marital traditions concerning purity in *m. Ketuboth* 7.7: "All defects which disqualify priests, disqualify women also [for marriage]."[347] Similar correlations are found elsewhere in rabbinic literature.[348] This priestly and sacrificial purity expected of the Church shows that the sacrificial character of Eph 5:1–2 remains present in Paul's mind throughout our pericope: the mystical bride of Christ is held to the same standard of purity as brides, priests and sacrificial animals. The holiness and purity of the Messiah's bride of course also requires sexual purity (cf. 5:3–6, 12). This recalls Paul's similar concerns about sexual immorality in 1 and 2 Corinthians, and the destructive effect that such behavior has on the Body of Christ and Temple of the Holy Spirit.[349]

The expression ἁγίος καὶ ἀμώμος was already seen in Eph 1:4, where the individual members of the church are "chosen in him" and called to be ἁγίους καὶ ἀμώμους κατενώπιον αὐτοῦ ἐν ἀγάπῃ. By contrast, in 5:27 the expression

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343 Lev 22:17–25; Num 19:2; Deut 15:21; 17:1. The Mishnah specifies that "these same blemishes [of animal sacrifices], whether lasting or passing, likewise render [priests] unqualified [to serve in the temple]" (*m. Bekhoroth* 7:1).

344 For examples of מוּם meaning a moral fault, see Deut 32:5; 2 Sam 14:25; Job 11:15; 31:7; Prov 9:7; Cant 4:7; Dan 1:4.

345 Eph 1:4; 5:27; Phil 2:15; Col 1:22; Heb 9:14; 1 Pet 1:19; Jude 1:24; Rev 14:5.

346 Cf. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 361.

347 "המקדש את האישה…על מנת שאין בה מומין, ונמצאו בה מומין – אינה מקודשת; כנסה סתם, ונמצאו בה מומין – תצא שלא בכתובה: שכל המומין הפוסלין בכוהנים, פוסלין בנשים." (Sampley, p. 71).

348 Cf. *PRK* 4:10 (Br./Kap.84), where the red heifer is associated with both the bride of the Canticle and with Israel: the red heifer is "faultless" (תְּמִימָה) as is Israel (יוֹנָתִי תַמָּתִי, Cant 6:9). The heifer is "without blemish" (אֵין־בָּהּ מוּם) as is Israel (כֻּלָּךְ יָפָה רַעְיָתִי וּמוּם אֵין בָּךְ, Cant 4:7).

349 In 1 Thess 4:3, the sanctification of the brethren is also primarily equated with abstaining from sexual immorality.

refers to the collective, mystical bride. The holiness and purity of the Church can only be attained through the holiness and purity of the individual members. Conversely, the holiness of the members subsists only in union with the Body of Christ whose holiness derives from its head. Eph 5:27 illustrates with nuptial language the doctrine of "salvation by grace" which was explicitly stated earlier in the epistle (2:5, 8–10): good works are not the prerequisite for salvation but rather its fruit. Commenting on this verse, Barth notes a similar case of "justification by grace" in the Jewish interpretation of the Song of Songs. A midrash on Cant 1:5, where the bride says of herself "I am black, but I am beautiful," states: "Israel is black every day of the week, but beautiful on the Sabbath; black she is in this world, but beautiful in the world to come."[350] The natural imperfections and "darkness" of the bride in this life are expected to be transformed into beauty and splendor at the end of the earthly journey – and this perfect beauty is already anticipated on the Sabbath, the sacred time of God's union with his people.

The perfect holiness of the Church in Eph 5 has prompted commentators to question *when* precisely she becomes Christ's bride. Since any Christian community, let alone the Church at large, falls short of the degree of purity and perfection described in Ephesians 5, some have assumed that it is only in the end, at Christ's *parousia*, that the Church becomes the Bride. Her perfection described in Eph 5 would not be a present status or possession but rather her promised eschatological future.[351] The difficulty with this idea is that in v. 32 the "one flesh" union is applied to the present relationship between Christ and the Church. If 2 Cor 11:2 clearly depicts a betrothal where the "chaste virgin" is still awaiting union with her beloved, here the Church is apparently already married to him. Yet the eschatological expectation is not wholly absent from Eph 5: Christ is still sanctifying and cleansing her "*that He might present* (ἵνα παραστήσῃ) her to Himself a glorious church" – implying that this presentation has not yet taken place. The tension between the two passages is another example of the Church living "between the times," having received the deposit of the Spirit and the divine Presence in her as betrothed bride, yet still longing in expectation of the full consummation of the marital union.

350 *CantR* 1:5; cf. Barth, *Ephesians*, 676.

351 Muirhead (*The Bride of Christ*, 184) writes: "It is only in the End that the Church becomes the Bride." Cf. Barth, *Ephesians*, 628, 669, 678. Lincoln (*Ephesians*, 377) disagrees and sees the Ephesian Church as already married to Christ.

4.6.7 *Christ and the Church: One Body, One Flesh* (*Eph 5:28–30*)

> [28] Even so husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. [29] For no man ever hates his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, as Christ does the church, [30] because we are members of his body, [of His flesh and of His bones].

The wife here is identified with the husband's own body or, synonymously, with his own flesh – in other words, with himself. The exhortation to the husband to love his wife "as himself," repeated in v. 33, alludes to Lev 19:18: "you shall love your neighbor as yourself."[352] Barth suggests that Paul may have known an early form of the rabbinic tradition that applies Lev 19 to marriage and praises the man "who loves his wife as himself and honors her more than himself."[353] With the mention of the body in these verses, Paul's metaphor takes on another dimension. Until now the husband was exhorted to love his wife with the selfless ἀγάπη by which Christ loves the Church. Here the dimension of ἔρος and bodily love comes into play. The man is to love his wife because she is really a part of him. As the quotation from Genesis reveals, it is in the intimacy of the sexual union that the wife becomes the husband's "own body" and "own flesh."[354] The two images of the Church as bride and Church as body are explicitly combined here, along with the sacrificial allusions that were discussed above. Christ loves his bride, the Church because she is his own body.[355] Recalling the identification of the body with the Temple of the Holy Spirit, and the Eucharistic Body of Christ – whose partaking signifies intimate κοινωνία with him, our pericope reveals a rich array of related metaphors intertwined with each other. The Eucharistic allusion continues in verses 29 and 30, which describe Christ's constant provision for and building up of his body whereby he "nourishes" (ἐκτρέφει) and "cherishes" (θάλπει) his ecclesial bride. Though the "nourishing" and "cherishing" can be interpreted in several ways

352 Cf. also Lev 19:34.

353 *b. Yebamot* 62b; cf. Barth, p. 633.

354 Since the two become together "one flesh," one must exclude the idea that the husband-wife relationship is "parallel to the soul-body relationship postulated by Plato, Aristotle, and the Stoics." The metaphor is not a devaluation of the body but rather its glorification. Cf. Barth, *Ephesians*, p. 631.

355 As stated in the immediate context (5:23, 5:30), in other passages in Ephesians (1:23, 2:16, 3:6, 4:4, 4:12, 4:16, 4:25), and in the rest of the Pauline corpus (Rom 12:4–5; 1 Cor 6:15; 10:17; 12:12–27, Col 1:18, 24; 2:19).

that are by no means mutually exclusive,[356] the most relevant interpretation for our purposes, and given the context, is the Eucharistic one.[357] Paul argued in 1 Corinthians 10:14–17 that partaking of the consecrated bread and sharing in the cup of blessing is the communion (κοινωνία) of the body and blood of Christ, and thus a form of one-flesh union (cf. John 6:56) that is also the source of the Church's unity. The Church, Christ's bride, is also his body which was taken out of him (see below). The Messiah nourishes and cherishes his bride by giving her his Eucharistic Body, the κοινωνία of his flesh and blood which commemorates and recalls his paschal self-offering for her, bestows upon her his life, and is the means by which he abides in her and her in him.

Verse 30 adds that Christ nourishes the Church because "we are members of his body, [of His flesh and of His bones]." The second part of the verse, which recalls Adam's exclamation of marvel when he saw Eve for the first time after she was taken out of him (Gen 2:23), appears in a majority of manuscripts but is missing in several important ones. Although the longer variant is generally considered to be a later addition to the original text,[358] the fact that it is quoted as early as Irenaeus and is the majority text indicates that it stems from an early tradition and is worthy of consideration. Regardless of the origin of the

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356 Barth, *Ephesians* (635) lists four possible interpretations of how Christ "nourishes" and "cherishes" the Church: (a) Considering the meaning of the verb ἐκτρέφω ("to bring up from childhood" or "to rear up to maturity"), the expression could describe a father's or mother's care for his children in a way similar to YHWH's caring of the destitute Jerusalem in Ezek 16:1–14. (b) It may allude to a formula of Jewish marriage contracts stating the obligations of a husband towards his wife. (c) The expression may have a cosmological meaning, describing the heavenly Father's care for the cosmos – or a king who is a benefactor to his subjects. (d) Christ provides sustenance to the Church by means of the Eucharist.

357 The Eucharistic interpretation of Eph 5:28b–29 was adopted by Jerome, who claims to quote directly from Origen's commentary on Ephesians: "The soul loves, nourishes, and cherishes that Flesh which will see the salvation of God, educating it with disciplines, fattening it with the heavenly bread, and supplying it with the blood of Christ to drink so that, renewed and with the look of health, it can follow its husband with free course and be unencumbered by weakness or burden." Ronald E. Heine, *The Commentaries of Origen and Jerome on St Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians* (Oxford University Press, 2002), 238, 280. On the Eucharistic allusions of Eph 5:29 see also Mussner, *Christus das All und die Kirche*, 154. Barth, *Ephesians* (635–36) and Best, *Ephesians* (178) dispute this interpretation.

358 Cf. Abbott, *The Epistles to the Ephesians and to the Colossians*, 172; Barth, *Ephesians*, 637. Lincoln, *Ephesians* (351) thinks that the longer reading is probably a later addition under the influence of the Genesis citation in v 31. Others have proposed that it is an anti-gnostic gloss "showing that the church is still 'flesh,' not yet purely spiritual." (cf. Schlier, *Christus und die Kirche*, 261; Barth, 723).

gloss, the early understanding of the Church as Christ's "flesh and bones" just as Eve was "bone of [Adam's] bones and flesh of [his] flesh" is another strong allusion to the Church's role as "new Eve." If the Eve-Church identification is less obvious and frequent than the Adam-Christ typology,[359] the three passages we have seen[360] provide sufficient evidence to attest that the idea already existed in Paul's days.[361] The Eve-Church metaphor also points to the apostle's belief in the pre-existence of the Church, "in Christ" "before the foundation of the world" (Eph 1:4): As Eve was originally one with Adam before she was taken out of his side, so the Church was originally one with Christ, "of His flesh and of His bones," before she was also "taken out of his side."[362] The creation of Eve is therefore "the prototype or antitype of the universal church's origin." As Barth says, "Eph 5 then proclaims not only the joining of Christ to his Bride, the church, but also the creation of the church out of Christ's side, viz. of his 'flesh and bones.'"[363] The Church, the New Eve, has not only been redeemed by the New Adam. She has been *created* out of him – as Eve was formed from Adam's side.[364]

4.6.8 *A Great Mystery* (*Eph 5:31–33*)

> [31] "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." [32] This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church;

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359 The Adam-Christ typology is explicitly unfolded and developed in several NT passages: Rom 5:12–19; 1 Cor 15:22, 45–49; Eph 4:22–24; 5:31–32.

360 1 Cor 11:8–12; 2 Cor 11:2–3; Eph 5:30.

361 The idea of the Church as New Eve was later developed by Irenaeus' recapitulation theory (*adv. Haer.* III 22:2f) and elaborated by Augustine (*Tract. In Ioann.* CXX 2). Cf. Barth, 722f.

362 Compare our discussion of John 19:34 above, where the water and blood flowing out of Jesus' side are understood as a symbol of the water of baptism and the blood of the Eucharist, and thus as the "birth of the Church."

363 Barth, *Ephesians*, 722–23.

364 On the Church as New Eve, Bedale ("The Theology of the Church," 72) writes: "Here we have an explicit analogy between the headship of Christ in relation to the Church, and the headship of husband over wife, of Adam and Eve, in the order of nature. Headship in either case implies not merely authority, but a certain relationship in the order of being. Eve derives her being from Adam: the Church derives her being from Christ, who is the 'beginning'of the new creation, 'the head' from whom the whole body . . . increases.' In a word, the Church is the *Second Eve*, spouse of the *Second Adam*, 'bone of his bone, flesh of his flesh.' Thus Christ, loving the Church, 'loves his own body.' See also Dubarle, "Les fondements bibliques du titre marial de Nouvelle Ève," 52–56.

In quoting Genesis 2:24, Paul has retained the expression "for this reason" from the original verse.[365] For *which* reason, then, would Christ "leave his father and mother" and be joined to his wife, the Church, to become one flesh with her? The antecedent of "ἀντὶ τούτου" is most likely that of the original context in Genesis: because woman was taken out of man and is "bone of his bones and flesh of his flesh" – "*for this reason* a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." The ground for the one-flesh union is thus the original unity of the bridegroom and bride.[366] Eve was part of Adam's body: they were one before she was taken out of him. Their one-flesh union is therefore not a new event but a *re*-union. The application of this metaphor to Christ and the Church means that they too were originally one; this original unity, followed by the separation by which the Church was "taken out" of Christ, is the root of the mutual desire for union. Thus Adam's joyous recognition of Eve as a part of himself, as "bone of [his] bones and flesh of [his] flesh" is implicitly echoed in Christ beholding his glorious and pure ecclesial bride who was also a part of him from the very beginning. Theologians and commentators have seen in the Church's origin "of His flesh and of His bones" the ground for an incarnation theology whereby the Church is an "extended incarnation of Christ." Chavasse, for example, has written that as "Eve was the continuation and projection of Adam's body . . . so the church, her antitype, is the continuation of Christ's incarnation."[367] And Batey: "Christians are imitators of Christ (Eph v. 1–2), but they are more than this. They are the historic continuation of his personality (σῶμα)."[368] The Church, intimately united with her divine Bridegroom, continues to mediate his presence and salvation in the world.

We have mentioned earlier two other passages that refer back to Gen 2:24: Matt 19:4–5 (with parallel Mark 10:6–8) and 1 Cor 6:16. In Matthew, Jesus refers to the original unity of man and woman in his teaching on marriage and divorce. Yet he goes even further than the original Genesis narrative, harmonizing the two creation accounts and using Gen 1:27 ("He created them male and female") as the antecedent and reason for the one-flesh union of Gen 2:24. Thus the reason why "the two shall become one flesh" is not only because woman is bone of [man's] bones and flesh of [his] flesh; it is also

365 For some obscure reason, Paul changes the original words of LXX Gen 2:24 "ἕνεκεν τούτου" to the equivalent "ἀντὶ τούτου" in Eph 5:31, which has no bearing on the significance of the passage.

366 Cf. Barth, *Ephesians*, 637–38; 722.

367 Chavasse, *The Bride of Christ*, 70; cited in Barth, *Ephesians*, 723.

368 Richard Batey, "The μία σάρξ Union of Christ and the Church," 270–81.

because God Himself "made them male and female." For Matthew, this original one flesh *re*-union provides the ground for Jesus' prohibition of divorce which would be the "breaking asunder" of what God has joined in the beginning. This Jesus tradition possibly provides the background for Paul's idea of the indissolubility of the marriage between Christ and the Church, modeled on the union of Adam and Eve.

The use of the word μυστήριον in Eph 5:32 within the context of the Genesis quotation has been hotly debated in the history of the verse's interpretation. Translated as *sacramentum* in the Vulgate, it has been traditionally understood by Catholic theologians as the classic proof text establishing marriage as one of the seven sacraments instituted by Christ and "conveying the grace" earned by his suffering and death. According to this interpretation, marriage between man and woman would be the permanent reenactment of the communion and union of love between God and man in Christ, and the sacralization of what had been until then a mere societal institution. It would be "quasi an epiphany of the covenant between Christ and the church" which "not only symbolizes but recreates the union of Christ and the church."[369] Even though this interpretation of μυστήριον is rejected by a majority of scholars today,[370] one must grant that it does not merely stem from a proof-text reading of the word *sacramentum* but could be reasonably sustained from the nuptial and sacrificial context of Ephesians 5 and indeed of the entire epistle. Another interpretation would have μυστήριον be the equivalent of the English "mystery," denoting the miraculous or mystical essence of either the man-woman one-flesh union, or the union of Christ with the Church, or the relationship between both pairs.[371] Other occurrences of μυστήριον in Ephesians (1:9, 3:3–4, 9, 6:19) indeed refer to the formerly hidden purpose of God now revealed in Christ, and would seem to confirm this interpretation. A third possibility would have μυστήριον indicate that the quotation from Genesis in Eph 5:31 is to be understood in an allegorical, typological, and mystical way. This is how Paul interprets Gen 2:24 before he returns to its literal sense in verse 33. Lincoln suggests that this typological exegesis rests on a correspondence between creation (cf. Gen 2:24) and redemption (Christ and the Church).[372]

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369 Cf. H. Schmauch, *Katholische Dogmatik*, IV:1, 3rd and 4th eds. (Munich: Hueber, 1952), 622; L. Johnson, "The Mystery of Marriage," [Scripture 11 (1959)], 1–6; Barth, *Ephesians*, 746.

370 Cf. Barth, *Ephesians*, 744–49.

371 Cf. Barth, *Ephesians*, 642.

372 Cf. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 382.

> [33] however, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.

Following his mystical Christological flight, the apostle returns to earth and to the literal meaning of Gen 2:24 in Eph 5:33. Having brought to light the deep meaning of Christ's love for the Church and how their mystical union forms the prototype for human nuptial love, he returns to a final exhortation to conjugal love, with a repeated allusion to Lev 19:18.

4.6.9 *Summary: The Epistle to the Ephesians*

The Epistle to the Ephesians provides an extremely rich picture of the Church as Body of Christ, as "holy Temple in the Lord" and as the Messiah's mystical bride. The marriage between them evokes all of salvation history: Since Christ chose the elect "in him before the foundation of the world" (1:4), the Church is pre-existent, even mystically preceding Adam and Eve. The eternal, cosmic union of Christ and the Church was the "cosmic blueprint" for Adam's "one-flesh" union with Eve, and at the same time it is the perfect model to be imitated in every human marriage (5:31–32). Though Ephesians does not delve into the OT history of Israel, it alludes to the Sinai covenant in its mention of the "covenants of promise" given to the "commonwealth of Israel" by means of the "law of commandments and ordinances" that was abolished by Christ (2:11–15), bringing down the "wall of partition" between Jews and Gentiles. The marriage between Christ and the Church is rooted in his self-sacrifice at the cross and in the shedding of his blood (1:7; 2:16; 5:25) which demonstrated "the width and length and depth and height" of his love for his bride (3:18). The marriage is also portrayed as a Temple service (5:2) that sanctifies her through the "nuptial bath" of baptism (5:26–27) and "nourishes and cherishes" her as his own flesh (5:29) – with the Eucharist possibly intended. Christ's followers are called to imitate this sacrificial love, and particularly husbands in loving their wives (5:28). Although in Ephesians the exalted Christ is a heavenly being, the union between him and the Church is viewed as a present relationship (in contrast to 2 Corinthians where the absence of the bridegroom and hope of future union with him is emphasized). Yet the eschatological dimension of the marriage also remains present as the Church awaits the completion of the Bridegroom's work of sanctification "that He might present her to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish."

4.7 The Apocalypse: The Wedding Feast of the Lamb

4.7.1 *Introduction*

The Book of Revelation grants us a vision of the consummation of the eschatological marriage between Christ, "the Lamb" and his bride, the "New Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband" (Rev 19:7, 9; 21:2, 9; 22:17). With John's visions taking place before the throne of God in the heavenly Temple, the Apocalypse is also a book replete with Temple imagery. Yet at its conclusion even the heavenly Temple disappears, rendered obsolete by the unmediated presence of God and the Lamb (Rev 21:22). The identification of the wedding feast of the Lamb with the definitive dwelling of God among men (21:3) as climax of the book reveals a significant connection between nuptial and Temple symbolism in the Apocalypse.

Zimmermann argues that nuptial imagery in Revelation is not limited to chapters 19 and 21 but rather runs through the whole book.[373] The pieces of evidence he proposes for this are the "crown of life" as bridal wreath (2:10; 3:11), the 144,000 as virginal bride (14:4–5), the absence of the voice of the bridegroom and bride in the fallen Babylon (18:23), the wedding of the Lamb (19:6–9), Jerusalem as celestial bride (21:2, 9), and the summons of the bride (22:17). Some scholars have also suggested a possible influence of the Song of Songs in the Apocalypse, with Jesus knocking at the door (Rev 3:20; cf. Cant 5:2) and the woman "clothed with the sun" (Rev 12:1; cf. Cant 6:10). At the same time, the book displays a number of connections with Eden, Sinai, and the Temple, such as the reference to the woman of Gen 3:15 and her war against the dragon (Rev 12:1–17), the appearance of the Ark of the Covenant (Rev 11:19) in the heavenly Temple in a Sinai-like theophany, and the Tabernacle of God dwelling with men (Rev 21:3).

The first chapter sets the stage for the entire book with John's initial vision of Jesus in the midst of seven lampstands. Jesus is identified as the one "who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood" (Rev 1:5), pointing at the love of the Lamb for his redeemed ecclesial bride (although she is only disclosed as such at the end of the book) and his sacrificial atoning death for the sake of her sanctification. The vision of the seven lampstands (1:12), representative of the seven churches of Asia, is the first of many Temple symbols that progressively sketch a picture of heaven as Temple. In doing this, the author likely had in mind the tradition that the

373 Cf. Zimmermann, "Nuptial Imagery in the Revelation of John."

original earthly Tabernacle was modeled on the heavenly one (Exod 25:8–9); hence he uses the earthly sanctuary as main point of reference to depict heaven.

4.7.2 *Letters to the Seven Churches* (*Rev 2–3*)

4.7.2.1 To Ephesus: First Love and Tree of Life (2:4, 7)

Chapters 2 and 3 consist of seven letters addressed to the seven churches of Asia. In his letter to the church in Ephesus, Jesus reproaches her that she has "left [her] first love" (2:4). For the author of Revelation, the loss of this love is a serious failure and a call to repentance, for unless she repents, the community is in danger of losing her lampstand (2:4–5) and, implicitly, of not being admitted to the wedding feast (cf. Matt 22:1–13). This implies that love for the Bridegroom is not an option but rather a pre-condition to be admitted to the coming wedding banquet. To him who overcomes, Jesus promises to give to "eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God" (Rev 2:7). The exhortation to the Ephesians to love the bridegroom thus anticipates a return to Eden's Tree of Life, symbolizing an idyllic communion with God that is more fully described at the end of the book.

4.7.2.2 To Smyrna: The "Crown of Life" as Bridal Wreath (2:10; 3:11)

To the Church in Smyrna Jesus promises: "Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life" (τὸν στέφανον τῆς ζωῆς, Rev 2:10). Although this metaphor is often explained as pertaining to the wreath of victory in games (cf. 1 Cor 9:25),[374] Zimmermann argues that it more likely alludes to the bridal wreath of Jewish and Hellenistic wedding rituals. He notes that while only rarely in early Jewish tradition the crown/wreath is used as a metaphor for competition, there are several examples in biblical and post-biblical literature attesting to the use of crowns as bridal wreaths:[375] In Isa 62:3, Zion is called a "crown of beauty" and "royal diadem" as she is promised a future marriage with God. In Ezek 16:12 the maiden who represents Jerusalem, adopted and betrothed by God, is adorned as a bride with costly ornaments and a beautiful crown (στέφανος καυχήσεως) upon her head. In Lam 2:15 Jerusalem, the virgin daughter of Zion is called the "crown of beauty/glory (στέφανος δόξης), joy of all the earth." In Bar 5:1–2 Jerusalem is told to take off the garment of her sorrow and affliction and to put on her head "the diadem of the

374 Charles, *The Revelation of St. John*, 1:58; Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 94.

375 Cf. Zimmermann, "Nuptial Imagery in the Revelation of John," 153–56. Cf. Sir 6:31 where the wise man puts on Lady Wisdom like a "crown of gladness." On the crown of thorns as nuptial crown in the crucifixion narrative of the Fourth Gospel, cf. above, p. 178 n. 197.

glory of the Everlasting." In Cant 3:11, we read of "the crown (στέφανος) with which [Solomon's] mother crowned him on the day of his wedding,[376] and in *Jos. Asen.* 18:5, Aseneth puts a golden crown upon her head in preparation for her transformative union with Joseph. These cases – where the crown is either associated with the female figure of Zion or with a bridal garland – indicate that Zimmermann is probably right in seeing the crown of Rev 2:10 (and also 3:11) as alluding to a bridal wreath, and the exhortation to the church of Smyrna to persist faithfully in order to obtain the "crown of life" as an implicit invitation to the eschatological wedding feast of the Lamb.

4.7.2.3 To Laodicea: Knocking on Heaven's Door? (Rev 3:20)

In his letter to the last of the seven churches, Laodicea, Jesus invites his followers to join him in fellowship at his table: "Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with me" (Rev 3:20). The two principal interpretations of this verse are the tropological one, calling the individual to a present, mystical fellowship with Christ (in conjunction with the call to repent in v. 19), and the eschatological one, speaking of the imminent return of Christ and messianic feast (related to the promise to sit on his throne in v. 21). Tropologically, the close intimacy implied by the expression "I will come in to him" (εἰσελεύσομαι πρὸς αὐτόν) recalls Jesus' promise in the Fourth Gospel that he and the Father will "make their home" within the disciple who loves him (John 14:23). Eschatologically, it evokes the promise to his disciples in the synoptics that they will eat and drink at his table in the kingdom (cf. Matt 26:29).[377] Since both these promises are given at the Last Supper, and considering the liturgical setting of Revelation, this makes a Eucharistic interpretation of Rev 3:20 conceivable. Thus the Eucharistic meal of communion with Christ operates as the mystical and liturgical "bridge" between the Last Supper and the eschatological feast which it anticipates.[378] Commentators who favor the tropological/

376 This verse from the Canticle is one of the earliest that was expounded midrashically, identifying "the day of the espousals" as the day when the Law was given on Sinai. Cf. *m. Ta'anit* 4.8 and below, p. 295.

377 1 Enoch 62:14 makes a similar announcement of the future messianic feast shared by the elect: "And with that Son of Man shall they eat and lie down and rise up forever and ever." Cf. Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 114.

378 Cf. Feuillet, "Le Cantique des Cantiques et l'Apocalypse," 336. Cambe ("L'influence du Cantique des Cantiques sur le Nouveau Testament," 6) quotes Cerfaux and Cambier : « le banquet eschatologique est anticipé dans les joies mystiques que les chrétiens peuvent goûter dès maintenant dans leurs rapports avec le Christ, dans la liturgie en particulier. » Harrington (*Revelation*, 75) also sees Eucharistic overtones in Rev 3:20.

mystical interpretation suggest a parallel between Rev 3:20 and Cant 5:2, where the lover knocks on the door of his beloved's room and invites her to open and let him in so that she can express her love for him.[379] Both verses describe in similar terms a lover knocking on the door of his beloved, the sound of his voice, and a call to open the door:[380]

Cant 5:2 LXX	**Rev 3:20**
φωνὴ ἀδελφιδοῦ μου **κρούει ἐπὶ τὴν θύραν** ἄνοιξόν μοι ἀδελφή μου ἡ πλησίον μου	Ἰδοὺ ἕστηκα **ἐπὶ τὴν θύραν** καὶ **κρούω**· ἐάν τις ἀκούσῃ τῆς **φωνῆς** μου καὶ **ἀνοίξῃ** τὴν θύραν

This parallel would mean that the author of Revelation is reinterpreting the lover's knocking on the door and the beloved's sleepy, half-hearted response as applying to Jesus "knocking" on the "door" of the lukewarm Laodicean community, calling them to arise from their spiritual sleep and return the passionate love of their bridegroom in preparation for their coming wedding feast.

4.7.3 *Temple Liturgy, Earthly and Heavenly*

In chapter 4, it becomes evident that John's vision of heaven is in fact a vision of the heavenly Temple and heavenly liturgy, revealing many symbols known from the earthly Temple (others are scattered throughout the book): At the heart of the earthly Temple was the Ark of the Covenant; at the center of the heavenly Temple is the throne of glory (4:2–3) and also the Ark of the Covenant (11:19). In the Temple's sanctuary there was a golden lampstand (λυχνία) and a golden altar of incense; in John's vision of heaven there are seven golden lampstands (λυχνίας, 1:12) and a golden altar from which incense rises up to God (8:3–5). Four carved cherubim adorned the walls of the Temple; in John's vision four living creatures (which resemble the cherubim in Ezekiel's *merkavah* vision,

379 Charles, *The Revelation of St. John*, 1:101; Feuillet, "Le Cantique des Cantiques et l'Apocalypse," 334–341; Cambe, "L'influence du Cantique des Cantiques sur le Nouveau Testament," 5–9; Massyngberde Ford, *Revelation*, 422; Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 308.

380 In a way similar to Rev 3:20's reinterpretation of Cant 5:2, some rabbinic commentators interpret the call to open the door in Cant 5:2 as God's call for Israel's repentance within the context of their covenant with God. Cf. *PRK* 24:12; *CantR* 5:2 §2 (Simon 232); Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 308.

cf. Ezek 1:13–22) minister before the throne (4:6–9). Twenty-four priestly divisions served in the earthly Temple; twenty-four elders serve in the heavenly Temple (4:4). Outside the sanctuary was a laver filled with water and an altar of sacrifices; before the heavenly throne there is a "sea of glass like crystal" (Rev 4:6) and an altar under which rest the souls of the martyrs.[381]

The Temple in Revelation is most often called ναός, but sometimes also σκηνή (13:6; 15:5; 21:3). It has different forms: In his letter to the church in Philadelphia, Jesus promises to the one who conquers that he will "make him a pillar in the Temple of my God" (Rev 3:12). The Temple is thus a spiritual structure, made out of the communion of saints. These living pillars – the assembly of saints – are "before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His Temple" (Rev 7:15). Out of the Temple also come the orders to carry out God's judgment on earth (16:1) and the angels who execute it (14:15, 17; 15:5–6). In parallel with the liturgy taking place in the heavenly Temple, drama also unfolds in the earthly Temple, which is still the arena of the struggle between good and evil: John is commanded to measure it and its altar, but not its outer court, which is to be trodden by the Gentiles (11:1–2).

As the place of God's throne in heaven, the celestial Temple of Revelation is the domain of perfect קדושה and of ultimate consecration to Him. The word ἅγιος appears 27 times in the book to describe the holiness of God, of Christ, of the angels, of the New Jerusalem, and of the prophets, apostles and saints. In addition, the cosmic battle that rages throughout the book is portrayed as the struggle of God's saints against the forces of evil, which epitomize uncleanness, desecration and defilement. In the final vision, when the Lord God and the Lamb become the Temple of the saints, the divine sanctuary radiates with קדושה, entirely free from any stain of sin and from "anything that defiles" (Rev 21:27).

4.7.4 *Behold the* (*Paschal*) *Lamb: Passover/Exodus Typology in Revelation*

The source of the heavenly Temple's קדושה is God himself, and this holiness is imparted to the saints by the blood of the *Lamb* that was slain, the Lamb whose wedding feast is the climax and culmination of the entire book. The imagery is sacrificial and *paschal* as much as it is nuptial. The connection between nuptial, paschal and Temple symbolism is anticipated in Jesus' dual role as the one who *loved* the saints and washed them from their sins in his

381 Cf. Rev 7:15; 11:1–2, 19; 14:15–17; 15:5–8; 16:1. On Revelation as a Temple vision, see Briggs, *Jewish Temple Imagery in the Book of Revelation*, 45–110; Ben-Daniel, *The Apocalypse in the Light of the Temple*; McKelvey, *The New Temple – The Church in the New Testament*; Hahn, *The Lamb's Supper*, 68–69.

(sacrificial) *blood* (Rev 1:5), and it comes to the fore in chapter 5 with the revelation of his identity as "Lamb who was slain" standing in the midst of the throne of heaven. Jesus' sacrificial slaying and shedding of his blood is the ultimate testimony of his love for his people. It is the act by which he redeemed the saints and made them a priestly kingdom (1:6), just as the slaying of the Passover lamb effected the redemption of Israel from Egypt, leading to their adoption as "kingdom of priests and holy nation" at Sinai (Exod 19:6). It is by his blood that Christ washed the saints from their sins (1:5), redeemed them (5:9), washed their robes and made them white (7:14), and gave them power to overcome Satan (12:11). Jesus' example of conquering through suffering and death is then passed on to the saints: Their willingness to die a martyr's death and shed their own blood in imitation of their master is the testimony of their victory over the forces of evil (6:10; 12:11; 16:6; 17:6; 18:24; 19:2). The predominant role of the Lamb who was slain and the constant calling of his followers to imitate him thus point to a strong current of Passover symbolism in Revelation.[382]

The Lamb's sacrifice also constitutes the reason why he is given worship, honor and glory in heaven (5:8–14). The glory of God filling the heavenly Temple and the New Jerusalem is another familiar biblical motif recapitulated in the Apocalypse. The hymns of praise of the angels, elders and saints resound throughout the book in giving glory to God and to the Lamb.[383] While judgment is being executed upon the earth, the heavenly Temple is "filled with smoke from the glory of God and from His power" so that no one can enter it until the seven plagues of judgment are completed (Rev 15:8). This language recalls not only the plagues in Egypt but also the accounts of the divine כבוד / δόξα overshadowing Mount Sinai and filling the Mosaic Tabernacle and Solomonic Temple.[384]

Other connections with Passover/Exodus/Sinai in the Apocalypse include the Church as kingdom of priests (Rev 1:6; 5:10; cf. Exod 19:6), the reference to Balaam (2:14; cf. Num 31:16) and the hidden manna (Rev 2:17; cf. Exod 16). John's vision of the heavenly Temple in chapter 4 also strongly evokes Mount Sinai: the seer is invited to "come up" at the sound of a trumpet (Rev 4:1; cf. Exod 19:19–20) and he sees the throne of God's glory accompanied by thunder and

382 This thematic material shows great affinities with Ephesians 5, where the Messiah sacrificially offers himself for his bride, the Church, for the purpose of redeeming her, sanctifying, cleansing and washing her, and calling her to imitate him in this self-sacrificial love (cf. Eph 5:1–2, 25–27).

383 Rev 1:6; 4:9–11; 5:12–13; 7:12; 11:13; 14:7; 19:1.

384 Exod 40:34–35; 1 Kgs 8:10–11; 2 Chr 5:14.

lightning (Rev 4:5; cf. 8:5; 11:9; 16:18; Exod 19:16). The plagues of God's judgment are modeled upon the plagues of Egypt (Rev 8:7–9:21; Cf. Exod 7–11), as is the power of the two witnesses to turn water into blood and to strike the earth with plagues (Rev 11:6). The bitter waters (Rev 8:11; cf. Exod 15:23) and the earth "opening its mouth" to "swallow" the forces that oppose God (Rev 12:16; cf. Num 16:32) also evoke the wilderness wanderings. Finally, the victorious saints over the beast, standing by a "sea of glass mingled with fire" and singing the song of Moses and the song of the Lamb (Rev 15:2–3) clearly echo the hymn sung by the Israelites after they crossed the Red Sea (cf. Exod 15:1).[385] This sustained use of Passover, Exodus and Sinai typology indicates that John sees the journey of the saints in the Apocalypse as a new Exodus: the saints flee the forces of evil and struggle against them while en route to their final destination, the perfect "Promised Land" in the eternal dwelling of God where all evil will be annihilated.

4.7.5 *The Woman's Return* (*Rev 12*)

In Rev 12, "a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a garland of twelve stars" cries out in labor and gives birth in pain to a male child who is "caught up to God and to his throne" and in the future will "rule all nations with a rod of iron" (Rev 12:2, 5). This is an obvious reference to Christ in his royal-messianic role via an allusion to Ps 2:9. But for now, the woman and her child are persecuted by Satan/the ancient serpent who was cast down to earth after losing a fierce battle in the heavens (12:7–9, 13). The woman must flee into the desert (12:6) and there she must fend off the devil's attacks, aided by the supernatural interventions of divine Providence (12:14–16). At the end of the chapter, the woman's offspring are revealed to be those "who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ" (Rev 12:17). We have already mentioned the mariological interpretation of this figure as "new Eve" in our study of the Fourth Gospel.[386] More commonly, the woman is identified with the people of God, in the first place Israel (vv. 1–5; see below), but also the Church of the saints who are her "offspring" (vv. 13–17). In her identification with the Church (or through her role as "mother" of the Church) the woman is also quasi-identified with the New Jerusalem and bride of the Lamb who will be revealed later.

385 Cf. Nixon, *The Exodus in the New Testament*, 29.

386 Cf. above, p. 128.

4.7.5.1 New Eve

The woman of Rev 12 evokes Eve and the *protoevangelium* that announced a future conflict between the serpent and the "woman," between his seed and her seed (τοῦ σπέρματος αὐτῆς), and also the woman's bringing forth of children in pain (Gen 3:15–16).[387] As foretold in Genesis, the woman of Revelation gives birth in pain, and she and the "rest of her seed/ offspring" (τῶν λοιπῶν τοῦ σπέρματος αὐτῆς – meaning the followers of Christ, Rev 12:17) are engaged in a life-and-death struggle against the dragon, identified as "that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan" (Rev 12:9). This combat between the "woman" and her seed, and the devil and his angels indicates that the woman of Revelation is the "woman" announced in Gen 3:15 – the "new Eve" whose seed was to bruise the head of the ancient serpent.

4.7.5.2 Exodus Typology?

Mounce suggests that Exodus typology is woven throughout the entire chapter.[388] The woman's pursuit by the dragon and her flight into the wilderness (12:6, 13) recalls Pharaoh's pursuit of the Israelites as they left Egypt and fled into the desert. The "two wings of a great eagle" given for her escape (12:14) evoke the "eagle's wings" by which God delivered Israel from the Egyptians (Exod 19:4). The flood of water spewed out of the dragon's mouth to drown the woman alludes to the attempt to drown the Israelite children in the Nile (Exod 1:22), or the flooding of the waters of the Red Sea (Exod 14). And the opening of the earth evokes the swallowing up of the men of Korah into the earth (Num 16:31–33).

4.7.5.3 The Woman as Ark of the Covenant?

Some authors have suggested that the juxtaposition of the Ark of the Covenant's appearance in Rev 11:19 with that of the woman in Rev 12:1 is no mere coincidence but rather a carefully planned literary device that intends to identify the Ark with the woman. In 11:19, in the aftermath of the judgment of the nations and as the twenty-four elders worship God, seemingly out of nowhere we read that "the Temple of God was opened in heaven, and the Ark of His Covenant was seen in His Temple" (Rev 11:19). This appearance is accompanied with Sinai-like natural phenomena of "lightnings, noises, thunderings, an earthquake, and great hail" (cf. Exod 19:6). One would expect the author to elaborate upon this stupendous vision of the long-lost Ark reappearing for

387 On the association of the woman of Rev 12 and Gen 3:15, cf. Harrington, *Revelation*, 129–130; Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 630.

388 Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 245.

the first time in centuries since it went missing at the destruction of the first Temple. But the Ark disappears as soon as it came: in the very next verse it is replaced by the woman who also appears in the midst of heaven. Since the woman carries Christ in her womb (the ultimate source of קדושה) and is representative of the Church (Rev 12:17), elsewhere identified as the holy Temple of God, her identification with the sacred Ark of the Covenant is not far-fetched.[389]

4.7.5.4 Daughter of Zion and Canticle's Bride?

The woman of Rev 12 also evokes the prophetic images of the *Daughter of Zion* as a pregnant woman in labor pains, and she is thus closely associated with Israel. One thinks of Isa 26:17–18 (where the defeat of the serpent is also mentioned, 27:1) or Isa 66:7–9 (LXX), which depicts Zion "escaping" and giving birth to a male child. The astral motif in the woman's description (sun, moon, twelve stars) recalls Joseph's dream (Gen 37:9), where the sun and moon represent Joseph's father and mother and the twelve stars the twelve sons of Jacob. This image is consistent with the woman's identity as representative of the twelve tribes of Israel. Others see a closer dependence between Rev 12 and two other texts: the first is Isa 60, which portrays Zion as a glorious sunrise enlightened by the light of God (v. 1), taking on the attributes of the sun and moon (vv. 19–20), and finding her strength and prestige restored (vv. 12–14). The second text is Cant 6:10, where the Shulamite "looks forth as the dawn, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, awesome as an army with banners." The two texts may well be related since both the beauty of Zion and of the Shulamite are compared to the light of dawn and to the sun and moon, with an emphasis also on powerful military strength.[390] These associations with Isa 60 and Cant 6 imply that the woman of Rev 12 takes on the dual role of city and bride – a dual role that indeed returns in Rev 21 with the identification of the Lamb's bride as the New Jerusalem.

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389 This idea is quite plausible considering the existence of an earlier typological identification of the Mother of the Messiah with the Ark in the Lukan tradition. Compare the entrance of the Ark into Jerusalem (2 Sam 6:2–11) with the Visitation narrative of Luk 1:39–44: "But why is this granted to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?" (Luke 1:43); "How can the ark of the LORD come to me?" (2 Sam 6:9); "And Mary remained with her about three months" (Luke 1:56); "The ark of the LORD remained in the house of Obed-Edom the Gittite three months" (2 Sam 6:11). Cf. Laurentin, *The Truth of Christmas*, 56–58, 154–59.

390 Feuillet ("Le Cantique des Cantiques et l'Apocalypse," 341–348) and Cambe ("L'influence du Cantique des Cantiques sur le Nouveau Testament," 9–12) argue for the influence of both these texts on Rev 12:1.

4.7.6 *The 144,000 as Virginal Bride* (*Rev 14:4–5*)

In yet another nuptial image for the Church, Zimmermann proposes that the 144,000 redeemed who appear with the Lamb on Mount Zion (Rev 14:4–5; 7:4) represent his virginal bride. Their identity as those who "were not defiled with women, for they are virgins" (14:4) alludes to the early Jewish traditions of the fallen angels of Gen 6:1–4.[391] In contrast to the "sons of God" who defiled themselves with women and thereby betrayed the covenant, the 144,000 virgins faithfully follow the Lamb wherever he goes and are "without fault (ἄμωμοί) before the throne of God" (Rev 14:5). As Zimmermann notes, virginity and immaculateness are the most basic elements of a bride in early Judaic time.[392] We have discussed above the cultic context of ἄμωμος as pertaining to sacrifices, priests, and brides in our discussion of Eph 5:27.[393] These three applications of ἄμωμος also apply to the saints in Revelation who have sacrificially shed their blood in martyrdom (Rev 6:10; 12:11; 17:6, 14; 19:2), perform a priestly ministry serving (λατρεύουσιν) the Lord in His Temple (7:14–15), and collectively form the Bride of the Lamb, the eternal Temple and the New Jerusalem (21:2, 9–10).

Also related to the nuptial imagery of this passage is the motif of redemption. It was the husband's obligation in early Judaism to ransom his wife should she be taken prisoner.[394] In Rev 14:4, the 144,000 who "follow (ἀκολουθέω) the Lamb wherever He goes" are described as having been "redeemed from among men, [being] firstfruits to God and to the Lamb." The Lamb redeeming or "buying back" his disciples from the forces of evil may point to the carrying out of his role as faithful husband. This verse also shows similarities with Jer 2:2–4, where the Lord recalls Israel's "love as a bride" (אַהֲבַת כְּלוּלֹתָיִךְ) when she "followed me (ἐξακολουθέω) in the wilderness," being "holy to the LORD, the first fruits of his harvest." The common points are virginity/betrothal, redemption (from Egypt, Jer 2:6), the following of the bridegroom, and the bride's identity as firstfruits. We also recall the linguistic relationship between sanctity (קְדֻשָּׁה) and betrothal (קִדּוּשִׁין), expressing the act of setting apart the woman for her husband: the 144,000 are entirely set apart for the Lamb, not having been "defiled with woman." In short, the virginity and immaculateness

391 Cf. 1 En. 7:1; 9:8; 10:11; 15:2–7.

392 Cf. Deut 22:13–21; Sir 7:24; Tob 3:14; Philo, *De spec. leg.* 3:80; Josephus, *Ant.* 4.8.23 §244–248; *m. Ketub.* 7:7–8; *b. Ketub.* 46a; Zimmermann, "Nuptial Imagery in the Revelation of John," 158 n. 19.

393 Cf. above, pp. 238–240.

394 Cf. *m. Ketub.* 4:4, 8; *m. Hor.* 3:7; *b. Ketub.* 47b; 51b; 52a.b; *t. Ketub.* 4:5.

of the 144,000, their promise to follow the Lamb, and their identity as ransomed first-born are all nuptial motifs indicating that the vision in Rev 14:1–5 may well be an anticipation of the coming wedding feast of the lamb.[395]

4.7.7 *The Fall of the Whore of Babylon* (*Rev 18*)

Rev 18 depicts the judgment and fall of Babylon the great, symbol of the evil nations that oppose God's plan. The city is personified as a woman and set in stark contrast to the pure virgin-bride of Christ who is about to be disclosed, the New Jerusalem.[396] Babylon is "the mother of harlots" (Rev 17:5) who has fornicated with the kings of the earth and "made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication" (Rev 14:8; 18:3). She is also responsible for the blood of the Christian martyrs (17:6; 18:24). Though she was "arrayed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls" (Rev 17:4), glorifying herself and living luxuriously, she will be stricken with dreadful plagues and all of her riches will come to nothing in one hour (18:7–16). In the description of the gloomy silence that will fall upon the desolate city, we are told that "the voice of bridegroom and bride shall not be heard in you anymore" (Rev 18:23). This recalls the passages about the voice of the bridegroom and bride in Jeremiah and especially Jer 25:10, which speaks of "the grinding of the millstones and the light of the lamp" (as in Rev 18:23). The promiscuity and defilement of the whore stand in contrast to the virginity and immaculateness of the Lamb's bride, and the future absence of the voice of the bridegroom and bride will characterize the city of the godless in contrast to the joy and celebration of the wedding that will take place in the city of God.

4.7.8 *The Wedding of the Lamb* (*Rev 19:6–9*)

The nuptial imagery moves to the forefront as the narrative comes to a climax in the last chapters of the book. Following the demise of Babylon, a great multitude proclaims:

> Alleluia! For the Lord God Omnipotent reigns! Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife (γυνή) has made herself ready (ἡτοίμασεν ἑαυτήν). And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. (19:6–7).

395 Cf. Zimmermann, "Nuptial Imagery in the Revelation of John," 157–60.

396 Cf. Zimmermann, "Nuptial Imagery," 160–62.

To this acclamation, the angel responds: "Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!" (19:9). A great feast is implied: it is the realization of the eschatological marriage that the prophets (cf. Isa 25:6–8) and apostles (cf. Matt 22:1–13) had announced and longed for. The bridegroom is the Messiah (cf. Matt 25:1–13) and the bride is the people of God (cf. 2 Cor 11:2) – although her identity is only revealed later. Zimmermann identifies an intertextual relation between Rev 19:6–9 and the royal wedding Psalm 45. Both have as common motifs an omnipotent king who reigns and is praised, the joy of the wedding and glory of the king, an adorned bride wearing bright garments, and the theme of righteousness and justice.[397] Fekkes mentions Isa 61:10 as another possible background to Rev 19:6–9.[398] It too has a call to rejoice (שׂוֹשׂ אָשִׂישׂ) and it presents the people of God as a bride who is "adorned" for her husband. She is divinely granted "garments of salvation" and a "robe of righteousness" as wedding garment, an image that resembles the bride's garment of fine linen – "the righteous acts of the saints" in Rev 19:8.[399]

The contrast between the earthly city – the adulteress Babylon arrayed in purple and scarlet who is "mother of harlots" (17:2–5; 18:3) – and the heavenly city – the Lamb's pure wife dressed in her clean, bright, fine linen (βύσσινον λαμπρὸν καθαρόν) representing "the righteous acts of the saints" (19:8) – is evident. The identification of the Lamb's wife with the good deeds of the saints establishes her identity as the Church. The imagery of the bride's purity recalls the discourse in 1 Corinthians 6:15–20 on the need to keep the Temple of the Holy Spirit pure by fleeing sexual immorality, and the exhortation to the chaste virgin of 2 Cor 11:2 to guard her simplicity and purity. The description of the radiant wife is also reminiscent of the "glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle" and "holy and without blemish" of Ephesians 5.[400] As in Ephesians, this beauty and purity is not her own but "granted" to her by her bridegroom.

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397 One also recalls that the targumic and midrashic tradition of Ps 45 view it as the wedding of the Messiah.

398 Fekkes, "His Bride Has Prepared Herself," 270–74.

399 Ezekiel's personified Jerusalem is also clothed with "fine linen (βύσσινος), silk, and embroidered cloth" (Ezek 16:13). Cf. also *Jos. Asen.* 18:5–10. Zimmermann, "Nuptial Imagery," 165.

400 The saints in Revelation are ἄμωμοι (14:5), just as the Church in Eph 5:27 is called ἁγία and ἄμωμος. The possible intertextuality between Ephesians and Revelation on the subject of the *hieros gamos* is supported by their common relation to the city of Ephesus – the probable addressee of the Epistle to the Ephesians and possibly the place where Revelation was written. Ephesians is also a city where there were disciples of John the Baptist (Acts 19: 3–4), to whom is also attributed a nuptial tradition (John 3:29). Cf. Massyngberde Ford, *Revelation*, 3, 33, 37.

Although Rev 19:6–9 tells us little about the identity of the Lamb's wife, her designation as γυνή (rather than νύμφη) recalls the splendidly clothed γυνή of Rev 12 (the only other γυνή figure in the Apocalypse apart from the whore of Babylon). This has led some scholars to conclude that these two women are one and the same – metaphorical figures of the redeemed ecclesial community, identified with the saints by way of different images:[401] Whereas the woman of Rev 19 is clothed with the "righteous deeds of the saints," in Rev 12:17 the woman's "offspring" are those "who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ." A difference is seen in the fact that the woman of Rev 12 already gives birth (to a messianic figure symbolizing Christ) and has a numerous progeny in the saints, while the woman of Rev 19 is only just getting married (to Christ the Lamb). It could be that the woman clothed with the sun gives us a telescopic view of the Christological and ecclesiological dimensions of Israel/the Church (perhaps assuming the YHWH-Israel marriage and emphasizing the woman's motherhood in her giving birth to Christ and the saints), while the woman of Rev 19 underlines the eschatological aspect of the marriage to come. At the time of the writing of Revelation, Christians familiar with this nuptial symbolism would have seen themselves as living "between the times," betrothed to Christ but still awaiting their final marriage with him.[402] In Revelation (as in Eph 5), the Church is Christ's wife (γυνή) uniting herself with her beloved. But if in Ephesians the union is mystical and spiritual, in Rev 19–21 it is eschatological. The imagery highlights the transitory time between present betrothal (from the reader's perspective) and future eschatological wedding. As ancient Jewish weddings began with a procession to the bride's house followed by a return to the groom's house for the marriage feast, the Church, now espoused to Christ by faith, "awaits the parousia when the heavenly groom will come for his bride and return to heaven for the marriage feast that lasts throughout eternity."[403]

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401 Cf. Zimmermann, "Nuptial Imagery," 168. Boismard (RB 1955, 294–95) sees resemblances between the woman of Rev 12 and the bride of the Lamb in Rev 21: both appear in heaven and are clothed with splendor; the woman is crowned with 12 stars while the bride (Jerusalem) has 12 gates and 12 foundations; both are related to Eden: the woman suffering from the pains of childbirth and threatened by the serpent recalls Eve, cast out of paradise, while the bride of chapter 21 finds the long lost Tree of Life.

402 This anticipation would have been exacerbated by the early persecutions of Christians (possibly under the reign of Domitian) to which the Book of Revelation bears implicit testimony in its vivid depiction of the ongoing struggle between the saints and the forces of evil. Cf. the Corinthian church in the same situation "between the times" as chaste παρθένος (2 Cor 11:2) above, p. 211.

403 Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 347.

4.7.9 *Here Comes the Bride: The New Jerusalem* (*Rev 21*)

Rev 19:6–9 was but a preliminary announcement of the wedding feast of the Lamb, still to be preceded by the turmoil of a penultimate eschatological battle, the millennium, the war of Gog and Magog, the definitive destruction of Satan and his evil forces, the final judgment, and the resurrection of the dead (19:11–20:15). Finally, John sees a new heaven and a new earth, and "the holy city, New Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband" (Rev 21:1–2). For the first time, the bride is revealed as the New Jerusalem. The image of the city-bride draws upon the rich prophetic tradition that we have often mentioned in the course of our study. But who exactly is the bride? Is she to be literally identified with the community of saints? As we have seen, and as Zimmermann points out, if the personification of Jerusalem/Zion was originally depicted in relation to its people/inhabitants, in wisdom and pseudepigraphical literature it increasingly took on the role of

> a self-reliant unity that excludes a simplified identification with her inhabitants or the people of God. Zion assumes, like lady wisdom, an intermediary role into which she enters as a person in relation to JHWH and to mankind. From within the intimate relationship with God, the city of God provides for the well-being of her inhabitants and can even create salvation for all people.[404]

Thus on the one hand the bride is the embodiment of the redeemed from all the nations and the "eternal felicity of all who follow the lamb."[405] On the other hand, her exact identity remains ambiguous. As eschatological Church she is not only the sum of her parts but really an entity that transcends her individual members. In Rev 19:7–9 there seems to be a distinction between the bride and the wedding guests who are "called to the marriage supper of the Lamb." Likewise, a clear differentiation is made between the city-bride and her inhabitants in Rev 21:9–10; 24–26. Zimmermann's observation, therefore, seems to be correct: The holy bridal city is "not simply a collective term for the sum of her

404 Zimmermann, "Nuptial Imagery," 172–73. For a thorough study of the New Jerusalem in the Apocalypse, see Lee, *The New Jerusalem in the Book of Revelation*.

405 Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 382. Kiddle argues that the heart of the symbol is a human community: "It is a city which is a family. The ideal of perfect community, unrealizable on earth because of the curse of sin which vitiated the first creation, is now embodied in the redeemed from all nations." Martin Kiddle, *The Revelation of St. John* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1940).

inhabitants but rather has an independent existence that becomes the counterpart of the bridegroom."[406]

The creation of "a new heaven and a new earth," with the appearance of the glorious New Jerusalem descending from heaven, is the culmination of God's salvific action in human history. There, finally, redeemed humanity will find rest from its toilsome journey, dwelling in God's presence with no more suffering or death, freely drinking from the "fountain of the water of life." The ultimate blissful union of the bride with her beloved is described in Temple imagery:

> Behold, the Tabernacle of God (ἡ σκηνὴ τοῦ θεοῦ) is with men, and He will dwell (σκηνώσει) with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God. (Rev 21:3)[407]

The verb σκηνόω, which in John 1:14 denotes the "tabernacling" of the λόγος among men – as the *Shekhinah* previously dwelt in the desert Tabernacle – returns here with the same connotation of the divine Presence dwelling among his bride and people. Yet it no longer dwells mystically and secretly in the life of the believer but is now eschatologically manifest to all, accompanied by the definitive end of all pain, sorrow and death (Rev 21:4).[408] Another parallel with the Fourth Gospel is the free gift of the "fountain of the water of life" to whoever thirsts (Rev 21:6), no longer a mere promise as given to the Samaritan woman (John 4:14) and to the Jews at the Feast of Tabernacles (John 7:38), but now a present reality indissociable from the great wedding feast.

In another vision, the New Jerusalem, now called both "the bride" (νύμφη) and "the Lamb's wife" (γυνή) descends from heaven on a "great and high mountain," having "the glory of God" (21:9–11). The glory of God reflected in his city-bride-Temple on His holy mountain evokes the glory that was revealed at Sinai and in the Temple, and the familiar "mountain of the Lord" traditions. Ezekiel's Temple also has a prominent place since it was to be built in a city on a "very high mountain" (Ezek 40:2). The light of the New Jerusalem is "like

406 Zimmermann, "Nuptial Imagery," 174.

407 Cf. Exod 29:45; Ezek 37:27; Lev 26:11–12; Jer 31:33; Zech 2:10–11; 8:8. For a discussion on the parallel passages to Rev 21:3, cf. Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, 1122–23.

408 We recall that the only places where σκηνόω appears in the NT are John 1:14 and Rev 7:15, 12:12, 13:6, and 21:3, either describing the indwelling of God among His people, or the indwelling of His people in heaven. "When the Seer writes that the tabernacle of God is with us, he is saying that God in his glorious presence has come to dwell with us" (Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 383).

a most precious stone, like a jasper stone, clear as crystal" (Rev 21:11). The adornment and glory of the bride recalls again the "glorious" (ἔνδοξος) Church of Ephesians 5:27, now manifest in all its splendor. The city is surrounded by a high wall with twelve gates (representing the twelve tribes of Israel, cf. Ezek 48:30–34) and twelve foundations (representing the twelve apostles, Rev 21:12–14). Its wall is made of jasper, and the city itself is of "pure gold, like clear glass" (Rev 21:18).[409] The twelve foundations of the wall are adorned with all kinds of precious stones, and the twelve gates are twelve pearls (21:19–21). Fekkes has underlined the dependence of Rev 21:18–21 upon Isa 54:11–12 and Tob 13:16–17.[410] We have discussed the correlation between precious stones, nuptial symbolism, and eschatological imagery; all of these motifs converge again here in the adornment of precious stones of the New Jerusalem and Lamb's bride.[411]

The perfect union between God and his bride as He "tabernacles" with her forever dispenses altogether with the need for a Temple structure. Even the heavenly Temple, which was the setting for the greater part of the book, fades into oblivion in its closing chapters. John sees no Temple in the New Jerusalem, "for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its Temple (ναός)."[412] The heavenly city radiates with the δόξα of the eternal and divine Sanctuary: "The city had no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God (ἡ δόξα τοῦ θεοῦ) illuminated it" (21:23). In contrast to the various levels of sanctity of the former earthly temple, there is no more separation between sacred and profane, between God's people and God Himself in the New Jerusalem. The *Shekhinah*, which had abandoned the Temple and the Holy City in Ezekiel's time, permanently returns to become the eternal dwelling place of God's people, as ultimate fulfillment of God's promise to establish his sanctuary and dwelling place in their midst forever (cf. Ezek 37:26–28).

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409 The depiction of the New Jerusalem as a bride made of pure gold is perhaps related to the rabbinic tradition describing the "Jerusalem of Gold" as a crown worn by a bride (*t. Shabbat* 4:6; *b. Sotah* 49b), such as the one Rabbi Akiva made for his wife (*y. Shabbat* 6:1; *b. Shabbat* 59b; *b. Nedarim* 50a). Cf. ליון כ"ץ, "ירושלים של זהב"

410 Fekkes, "His Bride has Prepared Herself," 274–282.

411 Cf. above, p. 72 and Appendix B.

412 Rev 21:22. Flusser has shown that the absence of a physical temple in the eschatological Jerusalem and the idea that God will be the city's light, emanating from the "lamp of the Messiah" mentioned in Ps 132:17, is not a Christian innovation but is also found in several Jewish sources. Cf. *GenR* to Gen 24:1 (Th./Alb. 634); *LevR* to Lev 24:2 (Marg. 733); *Tanhuma* to Exod 27:20 (Buber, p. 99). "No Temple in the City" in *Judaism and the Origins of Christianity*, 454–65.

4.7.10 *Return to the Tree of Life* (*Rev* 22)

4.7.10.1 Living Waters Revisited

John's last vision in the closing chapter of Revelation evokes many well-known biblical images:

> And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the middle of its street, and on either side of the river, was the tree of life, which bore twelve fruits, each tree yielding its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. And there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him. (Rev 22:1–3)

In this idyllic picture, John has skillfully woven traditions of the Garden of Eden with those of Ezekiel's Temple, while also integrating ideas borrowed from the prophets and from Johannine Christology. The vision evokes the gushing forth of miraculous waters endowed with healing power from Ezekiel's Temple (Ezek 47:1–12), reworked into the hymn of personified Lady Wisdom (Sir 24:25–33). In Ezekiel these waters flow from a physical Temple, but in Revelation they flow out of the throne of God, who along with the Lamb is the eternal Temple of the New Jerusalem (Rev 21:22). Aware of the Fourth Gospel's promise of living waters representative of the Holy Spirit (cf. John 7:37–39), the author of Revelation seems to be making Trinitarian allusions in his description of the return to Eden: the crystal river of life (alluding to the Spirit) flows from God and from the Lamb to effect the healing of the nations. As in Ezekiel's vision, abundant trees which bear fruit each month grow on both banks of the river. The identification with the Garden of Eden is explicit with the return to the Tree of Life and the end of the curse of suffering and death (Rev 22:3; cf. 2:1; 21:4). Moreover, whereas the healing power of Ezekiel's stream was mostly confined to nature – the desert and the waters of the Dead Sea – the author of the Apocalypse emphasizes the spiritual healing and reviving of souls, as announced by Isaiah (Isa 35:1–2, 6–7; 41:17–19; 44:3–4; 49:10; 58:11) and Jesus (John 7:38). Finally, whereas Ezekiel's healing stream was strictly confined to Israel's borders, John's vision is universal: the pure river of water of life brings healing to the redeemed of all nations who desire to drink from it.

4.7.10.2 Bridal Invitation

Just as Jesus' invitation to the Samaritan woman to drink his "living water" was given in a nuptial context, so is the invitation to drink the "water of life" flowing from the eternal Temple:

> And the Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" (ἔρχου) And let him who hears say, "Come!" And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely. (Rev 22:17)

The Spirit and the bride's invitation to Christ echoes the early liturgical *marana tha* (or *maran atha*) prayer to Christ (cf. 1 Cor 16:22). Cambe suggests that this could be an allusion to the Shulamite's invitation to her lover in Cant 2:10 (ἐλθέ, ἡ πλησίον μου) or 7:12 (ἐλθέ, ἀδελφιδέ μου).[413] This is theoretically possible in light of the nuptial context and the other allusions to the Canticle in Revelation, but it cannot be substantiated on basis of the text itself. Zimmermann proposes two options as to the socio-cultural background of this invitation: it could be the bride summoning her bridegroom to come to the house of her parents and take her to his own home for the wedding ceremony. Or, it might be the bride inviting her bridegroom to come to her in their bridal chamber to consummate the marriage.[414] The second option is perhaps preferable: the consummation of the marriage would be more fitting to the drinking of the water of life and the final apotheosis of the book towards which the whole story has moved. Thus the eschatological and ultimate union of divine bridegroom and ecclesial bride is at the same time the most intimate form of communion with Him and in Him who is the eternal Temple, and a return to the Garden of Eden from which flow the rivers of the water of life.[415]

4.7.11 *Summary: The Apocalypse*

Zimmermann's thesis that the Apocalypse is permeated with nuptial symbolism seems well founded. The *telos* of the book, the eschatological wedding feast of the Lamb and the New Jerusalem, is anticipated and prepared by a number of nuptial allusions. These include the "crown of life" as bridal wreath, Jesus knocking at the door as echo of Cant 5:2, the woman "clothed with the sun" – evoking Cant 6:10 – who is mother of the Church, the 144,000 as virginal bride, the absence of the voice of the bridegroom and bride in the

413 Cambe, "L'influence du Cantique des cantiques sur le Nouveau Testament," 12–13.

414 Zimmermann, "Nuptial Imagery in the Revelation of John," 176.

415 Compare the tradition preserved in *T. Levi* 18:10–12 predicting that the future eschatological priest will open the gates of paradise and return the saints to the tree of life: "In his priesthood shall sin come to an end, and the lawless shall cease to do evil. And he shall remove the threatening sword against Adam, and he shall give to the saints to eat from the tree of life. And the spirit of holiness shall be on them, and Beliar shall be bound by him." Cf. also *Apoc. Mos.* 13:2–4; 28:4 for a similar vision of the end of times as a return to Eden; Scroggs, *The Last Adam*, xii, 30–31.

fallen Babylon, and the contrast between the immorality of the whore and the purity of the Lamb's bride. The marriage between the Lamb and His bride is portrayed as a return to Eden – announced in the promise that the overcomers of the church of Ephesus will eat from the tree of life in the Paradise of God (2:7), and fulfilled with the renewed access to the tree of life and the end of the curse on mankind (22:1–3). The connection with Eden is also seen in the battle between the ancient serpent and the woman whose offspring are the disciples of Christ (12:1–17), evoking Gen 3:15 and implying that the Church, as offspring of the woman, is somehow linked to Eve and to the origins of humanity. The Apocalypse is also replete with allusions to the Passover, Exodus and Sinai narratives, chiefly in Jesus' predominant identity as (paschal) Lamb who was slain, and in the vision of the heavenly Temple described with Sinai imagery. It is out of the self-sacrificial shedding of his blood that the Lamb wins the right to redeem his people-bride and to receive the power, glory and honor that is normally due to God alone (5:6–13). Finally, the marriage of the Lamb is inseparable from the Apocalypse's Temple symbolism, which permeates the book until it is fulfilled and dissolved into the eternal communion of God, the Lamb, and his bride, the heavenly Jerusalem.

4.8 Summary: Nuptial Symbolism in the New Testament

Our study of the NT nuptial passages has revealed a great diversity in emphases and modes of expressing the marriage between Christ and the Church. At the same time, one notes a remarkable coherence in how the nuptial motif is developed in the various traditions.

In Matthew, Christ is the bridegroom, present among his people during his earthly ministry. But the absence of the bride from the story means that we cannot speak of a marriage proper between Christ and the Church. Jesus' followers are not the bride but rather "friends of the bridegroom" who rejoice in his presence while he is with them. Yet if the bridegroom's presence excludes fasting for the characters of the narrative, the readers find themselves in the opposite situation: the bridegroom has now been taken away and they are invited to fast (Matt 9:15) in preparation for his future return. Matthew thus emphasizes the eschatological dimension of the wedding feast and the need for his readers to prepare themselves for the future coming of the bridegroom. In this perspective, believers are portrayed as guests invited to the wedding feast (Matt 22:1–13) or virgins awaiting the bridegroom's arrival (Matt 25:1–13).

The nuptial symbolism is much richer in the Gospel of John. With the testimony of John the Baptist (John 3:29) the evangelist explicitly describes Jesus

as bridegroom and the community of disciples as bride. This idea is developed in a number of stories where women (especially) act as representative bride-figures of the Church. John views the marriage between them as a new creation, anticipated in the seven days of the prologue leading to Cana, and accomplished at the crucifixion, when the new Adam gives "birth" by entrusting his mother and the beloved disciple to one another, and in the sacramental blood and water coming out of his side (John 16:21–22; 19:26–27, 34). The mystical marriage is also a new (nuptial) Sinai covenant, source of abundant wine, as seen in the parallels between the Cana and Sinai narratives. It is also the establishment of a new Temple, whereby the Divine Presence tabernacles not only in the Temple of Christ's resurrected body (John 2:21) but also in the community of believers (John 14:23) who become the "Father's house." For the characters in the narrative, Jesus' signs are marvelous, but the teachings that proceed from them are obscure, mysterious, and even scandalizing. For the reader, however, the signs and teachings pointing to the mystical marriage and new Temple are fulfilled in the sacraments of baptism and the Eucharist. John's nuptial symbolism is actualized in a masterfully crafted realized eschatology: it is not so much geared towards a distant future as much as focused on the here and now of Christ's continued sacramental presence through the "living water" of baptism and the partaking of the Eucharistic "flesh and blood" of the Son of Man.

The nuptial union between Christ and his people is elaborated in a more descriptive fashion in our three Pauline epistles. In 1 Corinthians, Paul makes extensive use of temple mystagogy, building a rich theology of the body of the Christian as Temple of the Holy Spirit. There is no explicit *hieros gamos*, but the theology of the Body of Christ built by love, the intimate κοινωνία with Christ by partaking of his body and blood, and the identification of πορνεία with idolatry and its negative effects on the Temple of the Holy Spirit are all nuptial allusions. This imagery becomes explicit in 2 Corinthians, where the Corinthian community is called a "chaste virgin" betrothed to Christ and compared to Eve (2 Cor 11:2). She must temporarily endure the ache of being "absent from the Lord," but the unsurpassable δόξα of Christ, temporarily veiled in the fragile "tent" of the mortal body, will one day be manifest in the future "habitation from heaven," the resurrected body. The mystical marriage is a reality, but it is "not yet" – clearly eschatological and still lying in the future. In Ephesians, the *hieros gamos* and its connection with Temple, body, and sacrificial symbolism is explicit and very rich. The Church, which is at the same time a body, Temple, and bride, is the place of God's *kedushah*, received through Christ her husband and manifest through unity and love. As Jesus sacrificially offered himself for

his bride, so Christians should imitate this ἀγάπη by "walking in love" (Eph 5:2) – and all the more should husbands love their wives as Christ loved the Church. Christ's sacrifice has sanctified his bride and made her glorious; now united to her in a "one-flesh" union, he nourishes her and cherishes her as his own body. In contrast to 2 Corinthians, there is an aspect of the mystical marriage that is present and immediate in Ephesians: the Church is *already* one flesh with Christ, even though there remains an unfulfilled eschatological element in the expectation that the Church will be one day perfected, "holy and without blemish." Thus the moral life required of Christians, far from being dictated out of mere legalistic or casuistic concerns, in fact derives ontologically from their regenerated nature as bride of Christ and Temple of the Holy Spirit.

The future expectation of the bride's perfection and holiness is fulfilled in the book of Revelation, which depicts the consummation of the eschatological union between Christ and the Church in the heavenly Temple, filled with God's glory. Particular to Revelation are the names given to the bridegroom (the Lamb) and bride (the New Jerusalem) – though these clearly still represent the same protagonists of the nuptial drama – and the disappearance of the visible sanctuary, replaced by God himself who becomes the bride's eternal Temple.

CHAPTER 5

Nuptial Symbolism in Pseudepigraphical Texts

5.1 Pseudepigraphical Texts: Introduction

Nuptial symbolism continued its growth and development in the first century of the Common Era as early Christianity was in the process of forming itself and Judaism experienced the trauma of the destruction of the Temple. The present section continues our survey of early nuptial texts, considering a selection of five early Jewish and Christian pseudepigraphical books written in or around the end of that turbulent first century.[1]

5.2 Joseph and Aseneth

Joseph and Aseneth (~100 BCE–100 CE?) is an ancient midrashic story expanding upon Gen 41:45, 50–52, telling the story of the conversion of Aseneth and her marriage with Joseph in an ingenious attempt to explain how the great Hebrew patriarch, known for his chastity, moral integrity and exemplary faithfulness to YHWH, could possibly have married an idolatrous Egyptian woman.[2] The text is of uncertain origin.[3] Though for some time it was believed to be a Christian work, it is now generally considered to be a Jewish text (with some probable Christian interpolations) dating from sometime between 100 BCE

1 The texts in this section are generally pre-rabbinic and pre-patristic, but the dating of most of them is quite uncertain. It is possible and even probable that some were written while the Temple was still standing.

2 Some studies of *Joseph and Aseneth* include: Philonenko, *Joseph et Aséneth*; Chesnutt, "Joseph and Aseneth," in *ABD* 3:969–971; *ibid. From Death to Life: Conversion in Joseph and Aseneth*; Burchard, "Joseph and Aseneth" in *OTP* 2:177–201; *ibid.*, *Gesammelte Studien zu Joseph und Aseneth* (*SVTP* 13); Kraemer, *When Aseneth Met Joseph*; Humphrey, *Joseph and Aseneth*. A comprehensive online bibliography is found at http://www.markgoodacre.org/aseneth/biblio.htm.

3 There are two main version of the text: a short recension (Philonenko, 1968) and a long one (Burchard in Charlesworth, *OTP* 2:202–47, 1985). Unless otherwise noted, I will follow here the shorter text of Philonenko, following a majority of scholars who think this text is more original.

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and 100 CE[4] Recent scholars have seen *Joseph and Aseneth* as well anchored in the Jewish Wisdom tradition, while also showing some common features with the Johannine doctrines of "light," "water of life" and "heavenly bread," and with the Gnostic mysticism that developed somewhat later. Joseph is portrayed as the ideal Hebrew and representative of Israel who is able to mediate the presence of God to others who enter into communion with him. Called "son of God" (6:2, 6; 21:3) Joseph impersonates divine Wisdom. In a striking personification of Philo's surrogate figure mediating between God and man, he imparts to Aseneth true faith and divine life by being nuptially joined with her.[5]

The book opens with an introduction of Aseneth, who is the daughter of Pentephres, a satrap of Pharaoh. Aseneth is renowned in Egypt for her beauty. She dwells in a tower which bears several features typical of ancient temples, and in fact the description of this tower reveals characteristics common to those of the biblical Tabernacle and Temple. Her dwelling is made of ten chambers. The three innermost ones are her private quarters, and the other seven are occupied by seven virgins who attend to her needs. The first and innermost chamber, paved with precious stones and a ceiling of gold, contains the Egyptian gods that Aseneth worshiped and to whom she offered sacrifices (2:3–5). In this chamber, which is "sprinkled with myrrh" (13:5),[6] her bed, "looking to the east" (as did ancient temples) is "spread with purple (πορφύρα) woven with gold, embroidered with blue (ὑάκινθος), and fine linen (βύσσος)" (2:15). These are the same materials and colors found in the biblical description of the priestly garments, ephod, and breastplate of Aaron and his sons (cf. Exod 28:5–8, 15; 39:2–5, 8). Moreover, the court around the house, the surrounding wall and its four gates, and the 18 young men guarding them, though typical of a royal court, could also evoke a Temple court. The presence of "beautiful trees of all sorts that produce fruit" along the wall inside the court, and the

4 On the history of research of *Joseph and Aseneth*, cf. Chesnutt, *From Death to Life*, 20–64; on its text, language, character, date, provenance and genre, cf. *ibid*., 65–95; Humphrey, *Joseph and Aseneth*, 28–37.

5 Seaich notes (*A Great Mystery*, 173): "Here we see a romantic hero, who represents the Logos-Wisdom, "embracing" and "marrying" a penitent sinner, thereby filling her with the gift of eternal life; this was symbolized by a meal of "honey-comb" representing "heavenly manna." Significantly, this "heavenly manna" was kept in the Ark of the Covenant directly beneath the Embracing Cherubim, who traditionally typified man's union with the Divine."

6 For the nuptial use of μύρον cf. Cant 1:3; John 12:5; for its priestly connotation cf. Exod 30:25; Ps 132:2. The related σμύρνα appears in a nuptial context in Cant 3:6; 4:6, 14; 5:1, 5, 13; Ps 45:8 and in a priestly/cultic context in Exod 30:23. The MT of Prov 7:17 ("I have sprinkled my bed with myrrh") is most reminiscent of our text; but the mention of myrrh is absent from the LXX.

"rich spring of water" flowing through its center and watering the trees (*Jos. Asen.* 2:19–20) carries a triple allusion to the lush trees and flowing rivers of the Garden of Eden, to Ezekiel's eschatological Temple (Ezek 47:7, 12), and to the beloved woman of the Song of Songs who is "a garden locked," "a fountain sealed" and "well of living water," and whose shoots are an "orchard of pomegranates with all choicest fruits" (Cant 4:12–13, 15). Kraemer suggests that the description of Aseneth's rooms could also be viewed as a kind of "mystical cosmic map, with the courtyard representing Paradise, the seven rooms of the seven virgins representing the seven heavens, and Aseneth's three-room apartment representing a three-chambered temple," with the elevated location on the top of the tower evoking either Mount Sinai or the cosmic mountain traditions.[7] If this was the intention of the author, it would make the Joseph-Aseneth romance a figurative metaphor representing the encounter between Israel and the world, and the former's sanctification of the latter. Aseneth and her dwellings also recall Lady Wisdom. Her chambers full of costly goods are evocative of Prov 24:3–4,[8] and her garments recall those of the virtuous woman of Prov 31. But this beauty is deceptive, for Aseneth and her gods also embody the features of the strange adulteress whose charms are a deadly snare for the men of Israel (cf. Prov 7:5–27). Given the cultic setting of her dwellings, she appears to play the role of a priestess, and her bedroom as "temple" is nothing less than a sanctuary of crass idolatry.[9] Her beauty is thus but an enticing and dangerous trap that (not unlike Potiphar's wife in the biblical account) could wreak disaster upon Joseph's pure faith in YHWH.[10]

The danger appears to be all the more tempting when Aseneth meets Joseph for the first time. She is sumptuously "adorned as the bride of God" (*Jos. Asen.* 4:2)

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7 Cf. Kraemer, *When Aseneth met Joseph*, 116–120. Other pseudepigraphical traditions indicate that the features of Aseneth's courtyard (guards, wall and gates) are meant to represent paradise: In 2 Enoch 30:1 God says: "I laid out the paradise as a garden, and I enclosed it; and I placed armed guards." Cf. other depictions of an earthly paradise surrounded by a wall (*Apoc. Mos.* 17:1) and gates (*Apoc. Mos.* 19:1; *Vita Adae* 31:1; 40:1). The seven heavens are mentioned in 2 Enoch; 3 Enoch 1; 17:1–3; 18:1–2; *Ascen. Isa.* 6–11; *Apoc. Ab.* 19.

8 "By wisdom a house is built . . . by knowledge the rooms are filled with all precious and pleasant riches."

9 Humphrey (*Joseph and Aseneth*, 87) notes: "her bedroom seems to be the very room that is given over to worship, so that physical virginity and spiritual 'adultery' are juxtaposed – her inner chamber is a shrine to both states."

10 On the different identities that could be attributed to Aseneth, including Wisdom, the Strange Woman, the Daughter of Zion and Daughter Jerusalem (with parallels between *Jos. Asen.* 3:9–11 and Ezek 16:9–13), female lover and divine bride, cf. Kraemer, *When Aseneth Met Joseph*, 22–30.

with royal apparel that carries more priestly/temple connotations, including a fine linen robe of blue woven with gold, a golden girdle, bracelets and precious stones with the names of Egyptian gods inscribed on them, a tiara, diadem, and veil (3:9–11). Despite her appearance like the "bride of God," it is clear to the pious Joseph that she is unfit for marriage with him because of her devotion to Egyptian idolatry (7:6–7; 8:5–7).[11] Still, she does not fail to impress him. Moved to pity by her distress at his rejection, he prays for her, asking God to bestow upon her His life and salvation:

> Bring to life and bless this virgin. And renew her by your spirit [. . .] and quicken her with your life. And may she eat the bread of [your] life. And may she drink the cup of your blessing, she whom you chose before she was born. And may she enter into your rest, which you have prepared for your elect. (8:10–11)

This moving prayer, whose mention of the "bread of life" and "cup of blessing" or "cup of immortality" refers to gifts already possessed by Joseph (8:5),[12] has the effect of leading Aseneth to a genuine conversion: she gets rid of all her idols and food used for cultic meals, trades her royal garments for sackcloth and ashes (chap. 10), and confesses her sins to the true God in a long and heartfelt prayer (chaps. 12–13). Through her repentance, the deceiving opulence of idolatry gives way to an expression of genuine spiritual poverty. Casting away her false gods has opened the possibility of courtship and marriage with Joseph, and thus of embracing the true divine Wisdom.

In response to her prayer of repentance, an angelic figure from heaven, the "commander of the house of the Lord" looking "like Joseph in every respect," appears to her and replaces her garments of mourning with a new, magnificent robe, and her ashes with a beautiful veil (chap. 14; cf. Isa 61:3; Ps 30:11). These new garments signify a mystical and metaphysical transformation:[13] Aseneth

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11 Humphrey (*Joseph and Aseneth*, 88) notes how the contrast between them is reminiscent of the contrast between the Song of Songs' bridegroom, "radiant and ruddy" (Cant 5:10) and the beloved who is comely but dark (Cant 1:5).

12 The "bread of life" and "cup of blessing" of course carry strong Eucharistic overtones (cf. John 6:35; 1 Cor 10:16); cf. Christoph Burchard, "The Importance of Joseph and Aseneth for the Study of the New Testament: A general survey and a fresh look at the Lord's supper," *NTS* 33 (1987), 102–34 (also in Burchard, *Gesammelte Studien zu Joseph und Aseneth* (SVTP 13), 263–95).

13 Kraemer (*When Aseneth met Joseph*, 110f) sees this mystical transformation as related to similar transformations occurring through encounters with heavenly beings in the Enoch and *Hekhalot* traditions.

is now a "pure virgin" whose name is "written in the book of life" (15:1–3). From this day, the angel tells her, she will be "made new, and refashioned, and given new life." She will "eat the bread of life and drink the cup of immortality, and be anointed with the anointing of incorruption," and she will receive this divine gift of eternal life by becoming Joseph's bride (15:4–5). Following this soteriological experience, Aseneth herself will become a source of salvation to others through the mysterious figure of Repentance (μετάνοια), personified as a pure and beautiful virgin, the beloved "daughter of the Most High" and "mother of virgins" who has "prepared a *heavenly bridal chamber* for those who love her" (15:7–8). Having put on her wedding robe and again "adorned as a bride" in preparation for her wedding, Aseneth blesses God who has brought her "into the light," and she shares a Eucharist-like covenantal meal of bread and wine with the angel (15:10–14).[14]

Next, the angel summons Aseneth to get a honeycomb from her room, which recalls the desert manna: it is "white as snow and full of honey" (16:4; cf. Exod 16:31) and is the food of angels (16:8; cf. Ps 78:25; Wis 16:20; 4 Ezra 1:19).[15] The honeycomb has life-giving properties: made by the "bees of the paradise of delight," it smells like myrrh, "like the breath of life," and is given to "those who lie near to the Lord God in repentance," thereby granting them immortality: "every one who eats of it will never die" (16:1–8). In addition to its presence in nuptial contexts (cf. Cant 4:11), the honeycomb is also a symbol of Wisdom (Ps 119:103; Prov 16:24; Sir 24:20), given to Aseneth in anticipation of her embracing the Wisdom-figure of Joseph – in conformity and continuation with the nuptial embrace of Wisdom with her lovers in the Wisdom literature. The remarkable effect of the honeycomb on Aseneth is preserved only in the long recension of the text.[16] According to the angel, she is transformed into a living Garden of Eden:

> Behold, you have eaten bread of life, and drunk a cup of immortality, and been anointed with ointment of incorruptibility. Behold, from today your flesh will flourish like flowers of life from the ground of the Most High, and your bones will grow strong like the cedars of the paradise of delight

14 On the liturgical significance of Aseneth's meal of bread and wine, see Philonenko, *Joseph et Aséneth*, 89–98. Philonenko rejects the Eucharistic interpretation of the meal and sees it rather as related to Jewish meals such as described by Josephus and the DSS.

15 On the honeycomb as manna, cf. Philonenko, *Joseph et Aséneth*, 96. On the nuptial context of our text and the manna kept in the Ark under the embracing cherubim, cf. Heb 9:4 and above, p. 269 n. 5.

16 Cf. above, p. 268 n. 3.

> of God, and untiring powers will embrace you, and your youth will not see old age, and your beauty will not fail forever. (16:16 in *OTP* 2:229)

Following the angel's departure, Aseneth again puts on her magnificent royal bridal apparel. As final preparation before meeting her bridegroom, she has her maidservant bring pure water from the spring and she takes a ritual/bridal bath (an allusion to mikveh/baptism?) which makes her face radiant as the sun "and her eyes as the rising morning star" (18:7). Here too the longer recension adds an Edenic description of the soon bride-to-be that seems inspired by the Song of Songs:

> . . . and her cheeks [were] like fields of the Most High . . . and her lips [were] like a rose of life coming out of its foliage . . . and the hair of her head [was] like a vine in the paradise of God prospering in its fruits, and her neck like an all-variegated cypress, and her breasts [were] like the mountains of the Most High God. (18:9 in *OTP* 2:232)

Finally, Aseneth goes down to meet Joseph, who announces that he has "good news from heaven" for her. There follows a remarkable "soteriological embrace" which unites the two protagonists and imparts life, wisdom and truth into Aseneth by means of a triple kiss:

> And Joseph stretched his hands out and embraced Aseneth. And Aseneth (embraced) Joseph, and they greeted/kissed each other (ἀσπάζομαι) for a long time and both came to life in the spirit. And Joseph kissed Aseneth and gave her the spirit of life, and kissed her the second time and gave her the spirit of wisdom, and he kissed her the third time and gave her the spirit of truth. (19:10–11)

The embrace between Joseph and Aseneth is reminiscent of the ancient "sacred kiss" traditions in which a kiss is said to transfer life-giving pneumatic power from one person to another.[17] Following a ritual where Aseneth washes Joseph's feet (20:2–3; cf. John 13:1–15), it is finally the time of the wedding. Aseneth receives Pharaoh's blessing, which acknowledges that through her

17 One thinks of God "breathing" the breath of life in Adam (Gen 2:7), of Elisha resuscitating a dead boy by breathing into him mouth to mouth (1 Kgs 17:2), of the breath of life prophesied by Ezekiel which revived the dry bones (Ezek 37:9), or of Jesus "breathing" on his disciples as a way of giving them the Holy Spirit (John 20:22). Cf. Seaich, *A Great Mystery*, 175.

marriage with the "first-born son of God" Aseneth has now entered into direct familial communion with the divine and become the "daughter of the Most High":

> The Lord, the God of Joseph, will bless you, who has chosen you to be his bride, for he is the first-born son of God, and you will be called *daughter of the Most High*, and Joseph will be your bridegroom forever. (21:3, emphasis added)

At the climax of this nuptial drama, following the wedding celebrations and banquet, Joseph and Aseneth finally are united as husband and wife, and there follows the fruit born out of their union: the birth of their two sons Manasseh and Ephraim (21:8).

The soteriological and sanctifying *hieros gamos* of Joseph (portrayed as Logos and redeemer figure) to Aseneth evidently represents the mediating role of Israel effecting a process of "*sancta contagio*" whereby the Jewish nation, already enjoying direct communion with God, has the capacity to impart its holiness to those who commune with it.[18] Throughout the course of the drama, Aseneth trades the chambers of her father's tower, depicted as a sanctuary of idolatry, for the nuptial chamber where she is joined to Joseph. Their marital union is the culmination of a process of deep transformation for the maiden which advances through several successive steps: Joseph's prayer initiates the process and leads to her repentance, conversion and rejection of her idols – the absolute first prerequisite for her mystical transformation. This is followed by the changing of Aseneth's garments and her putting on a wedding robe, the writing of her name in the book of life, the transfer from darkness to light, the eating of the honeycomb (which originated in the "paradise of delight" and is a source of wisdom and eternal life), and the ritual/bridal bath as last purifying step before the union of bridegroom and bride. At the climax of this process of mystical metamorphosis, Aseneth's embrace and marriage to Joseph signifies her receiving new, divine life through entrance into the "heavenly bridal chamber," where she is able to partake of the "bread of life" and "cup of immortality."

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18 Seaich, *A Great Mystery*, 174. Kraemer (*When Aseneth met Joseph*, 21) sees the marriage of Aseneth to Joseph as alluding to several conceptual frameworks: the union of Wisdom personified and the Wise Man, of the lovers of the Song of Songs, of Israel and God, of the divine union of the daughter and son of God, of the primordial couple in Genesis, and of the soul's quest for restoration to primordial angelic identity, deriving from the tradition in Genesis 1.

What are we to make of *Joseph and Aseneth* and its relevance to our nuptial study? With its narrative set during the period of the patriarchs in Israel's "pre-history," the romance between Joseph and Aseneth does not claim to create any ties with Israel's future history. We should not, therefore, look for any connecting links with our four "nuptial moments" in salvation history. The drama does not take place throughout the history of the nation but rather within the life of the young Egyptian woman. *Joseph and Aseneth* is a mystical allegory which reveals parallels and continuity with Jewish wisdom literature and similarities with Philo's allegorical interpretation of the biblical stories. Most importantly, Aseneth's nuptial union with Joseph, the "son of God" (6:2, 6) is a life-giving encounter with the sacred in the "heavenly bridal chamber" (15:7) through Joseph's sharing with her the quasi-sacramental "bread of life" and "cup of immortality" (15:4). Her entrance into this holy sanctuary, unlike her former barren temple of idolatry, has the effect of forming a sacred kinship bond with the divine: she is now not only truly the "bride of God" (in contrast to the beginning of the story when this was only a false appearance, cf. 4:2) but also His daughter.

One last note should be made about the historical perspective of *Joseph and Aseneth*. Even though its nuptial symbolism is primarily mystical, the story is not entirely devoid of a historical dimension. We recall that the honeycomb of immortality originates from the "bees of the paradise of delight" (αἱ μέλισσαι τοῦ παραδείσου τῆς τρυφῆς, 16:8), which can hardly be anything but an allusion to the Garden of Eden.[19] Thus *Joseph and Aseneth*, like many other contemporary works, recalls the ancient Paradise as the wellspring of divine life that is intimately related to nuptial love. Likewise, even though the story lacks eschatological direction, it does use apocalyptic and eschatological imagery that is at times similar to the apocalyptic imagery of the book of Revelation. One thinks of the expression "bride of God" (4:2; cf. Rev 21:2), the courtyard with four walls fruitful trees and a stream (2:18–20; cf. Ezek 47, Rev 22:1–2), Aseneth's attire of precious stones (3:10), the manna-like honeycomb (16:1–4; cf. Rev 2:17), and the messianic appearance of Joseph (5:5; cf. Dan 7:13, Rev 1:12–16, 19:11).[20] It thus seems that the author of *Joseph and Aseneth* considered the historical perspective of the nuptial embrace of his two protagonists as connected both to Eden and to apocalyptic images.

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19 The relatively rare τρυφή (indulgence, luxury, splendor) also appears in Odes of Solomon 11:16, 24, where the context is clearly Edenic.

20 This apocalyptic imagery in *Joseph and Aseneth* and the parallels with Revelation have been noted by Rebekah Rowland, "Apocalyptic Imagery in Joseph and Aseneth."

5.3 The Odes of Solomon

The Odes of Solomon (~30–150 CE?) are a collection of Jewish-Christian hymns dating to the first century CE[21] in which the theme of the love of God for the believer (and vice-versa) is predominant. This love comes to fruition in a life-giving union between the human lover and his Beloved (God): man, through union with "the Son" (evidently Christ but not mentioned by name) also becomes a son of God by partaking of His immortality:

> I love the Beloved and I myself love Him, and where His rest is, there also am I . . . I have been united to Him, because the lover has found the Beloved, because I love Him that is the Son, I shall become a son. Indeed he who is joined to Him who is immortal, truly shall be immortal. (Ode 3:5–8)[22]

Ode 7 provides some details about this transferral of divine life to men, using strong incarnational language. The Beloved Lord takes on human form for the sake of uniting Himself with mankind: "He became like me, that I might receive Him. In form He was considered like me, that I might put Him on . . . Like my nature He became, that I might understand Him" (7:4–6). Elsewhere, the Son is identified with the pre-existent Messiah who was "known before the foundations of the world" (41:3, 13–15). Although he remains nameless, it is obvious that Jesus is intended, with allusions to his baptism (24:1), walking on water (39:10–11), crucifixion (27:1–3; 42:1–2), descent to Sheol (42:11–20) and resurrection (17:17).[23] He "shattered bars of iron" (cf. Ps 2:9) and loosed those who were bound, generously giving them his knowledge and resurrection through his love, sowing fruits in hearts, transforming them through himself (17:10–17), and imparting to them his own power (29:6–9).

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21 Charlesworth dates the *Odes* to sometime between 30 and 150 CE, probably around 100 CE Cf. Charlesworth, "Odes of Solomon" in the *IDB* 5:637 (1976); *ibid.* "Odes of Solomon" in *OTP* 2:725–34 (1985); *ibid.* "Odes of Solomon" in *ABD* 6:114–15 (1992); *ibid.* "Odes of Solomon" in *DNTB*, 749–52 (2000); M.-J. Pierre, *Les Odes de Salomon* (1994). For a study of the Wisdom mystery in the *Odes of Solomon*, cf. Seaich, *A Great Mystery*, 178–201. Verses indicated here are those of Charlesworth's translation.

22 Cf. John 14:19b ("because I live, you will live also").

23 On the anonymity of the Messiah in the Odes, Charlesworth ("Odes of Solomon" in *DNTB* 750) notes that "if the *Odes* are to be labeled Christian, then we need to also stress that the Christianity of the *Odes* is articulated so that a Jew could join in chanting them."

This life-giving love is expressed in nuptial language through a "sacred embrace" or "kiss" between the divine and human protagonists, imparting immortal life to the latter through the Holy Spirit:

> And immortal life embraced me, and kissed me. And from that life is the Spirit which is within me. And it cannot die because it is life. (Ode 28:7–8)

This "kiss" between heaven and earth originates in a type of *hieros gamos* within the Godhead where the Son/Logos is, as it were, "milk" coming out of the "breasts of God" (19:1–3), and the Holy Spirit provides this milk to the world. To this Trinitarian image follows a remarkable early theology of the Incarnation: "the womb of the Virgin took [the milk] and she received conception and gave birth. So the Virgin became a mother with great mercies. And she labored and bore the Son" (19:6–8). Thus on the one hand the Son is the "cup of milk" coming out of the Father for the purpose of nourishing believers, which the Virgin received through the mediation of the Holy Spirit. At the same time the Son is born as man of the Virgin-mother after she was fed by this very milk.

Another effect of the Odes' nuptial/soteriological divine-human union is the Wisdom-Logos' impartation of radiant light, power, and glory to men. As a result, they shine with a brilliance reminiscent of the shining of Moses' face when he came down from Mount Sinai:

> He is my Sun, and His rays have lifted me up; and His light has dismissed all darkness from my face. (15:2)

> For a great day has shined upon us, and wonderful is He who has given to us of His glory . . . And let our faces shine in His light, and let our hearts meditate in His love, by night and by day. (41:4, 6; cf. Exod 34:35)[24]

The last ode describes the love of the Savior for his followers, expressed through the helplessness of the cross (42:2–3) in explicitly bridal terms:

> I threw over them the yoke of my love. Like the arm of the bridegroom over the bride, so is my yoke over those who know me. And as the bridal

24 On the *unio mystica* with light in the Odes, cf. also 7:14; 10:1, 6; 11:11, 19; 12:3; 21:3; 32:1–2; 40:6. Cf. Ps 1:2, "and in His law he meditates day and night;" the closeness of language indicates that the odist is substituting 'law' with 'love'; cf. Charlesworth, *The Odes of Solomon* (1973), 142 n. 10.

> chamber is spread out by the bridal pair's house, so is my love by those who believe in me. (Odes 42:7–9)

If the bridegroom/bride relationship is familiar from the OT prophets, the mention of a "bridal chamber" (or "bed") as point of meeting between God and the believers represents one of the earliest explicit instances of this metaphor (hinted at with the בני חופה of Matt 9:15 and later profusely developed by the rabbis). This "bridal chamber" or "bridal pair's house" where lover and beloved meet is no doubt associated with the Temple, the natural place of fellowship between God and His people (4:1–2). At the same time, using an image borrowed from the prophets and from wisdom and Johannine literature, the Temple is the source of a stream of living waters (4:9–10; 6:8–18; cf. Ezek 47; Sir 24:25ff) – associated with the Holy Spirit (6:7–8) – that quenches the thirst of all people and revives them from the dead (6:10–18). The Johannine theme of living waters recurs frequently in the Odes, granting eternal life to the believer through an intoxicating "sacred kiss": Life-giving waters from the "living fountain of the Lord," sweeter than honey and the honeycomb, flowed from His "lips" (30:1–5; cf. John 4:14) and touched the odist's own lips, causing him to rapturously exclaim: "and so I drank and became intoxicated, from the living water that does not die" (11:6–7; also 40:1–2).

At the same time, another image is used to describe the point of union between God and man: Paradise. This is not surprising given the Garden of Eden's identification with the Holy of Holies in contemporary writings, where both are known to be a source of living streams of water.[25] Ode 11 is a portrait of paradise regained in the heart of the believer. On the one hand, paradise is a delightful *place* in which the godly are "planted," irrigated by a "river of gladness" and producing blooming and fruit-bearing trees (11:16–18).[26] On the other hand, being filled with the love of the Most High, the odist himself *becomes* paradise: his heart is "pruned" and it produces flowers and fruit: "I became like the land that blossoms and rejoices in its fruits" (11:1, 12).[27] Ode 17

25 Cf. Gen 2:10–14; Sir 24:25–31 (above, p. 77f.); Jub. 4:25–26; 8:19; and below (p. 382f.).

26 Similar descriptions of Paradise are found in Apoc. Ab. 2:21; 2 En. 8:1–7; *Jos. Asen*. 2:17–20; *Lib. ant. bib.* 12:8; cf. Charlesworth, *The Odes of Solomon*, 56 n. 30.

27 Cf. also Ode 1:2 "Plaited for me is the crown of truth, and it caused your branches to blossom in me;" Pss. Sol. 14:2–3 "The Paradise of the Lord, the trees of life, are His pious ones. Their planting is rooted for ever."

adds that this fruitfulness originates in the union with the Logos who "gave [his] knowledge generously" and "sowed [his] fruits in hearts" (17:13–14).[28]

Another connection between mystical union, Temple worship, and Paradise is seen in Ode 20. Here, the believer officiates as a "priest of the Lord," offering spiritual sacrifices of righteousness and purity of heart and lips (20:1–5). This spiritual priesthood and sacrifice presupposes a spiritual Temple. The believer is then invited to "put on the grace of the Lord generously, and come to His Paradise," where he is to make for himself "a garland from His tree" (20:7). The allusion is most likely to the Tree of Life. By eating of its fruit of immortality the believer will "recline upon [the Lord's] rest" and be restored to divine glory:

> For His glory will go before you; and you shall receive of His kindness and of His grace; and you shall be anointed in truth with the praise of His holiness (20:9).

In summary, the Odes of Solomon describe a mystical union between God and the believer through the mediating figure of the Son-Logos-Messiah who imparts life-giving love and divine light to those who are joined to Him through the cross and resurrection. This union takes place in a "nuptial chamber," understood to be both a spiritual Temple and "Paradise." In this nuptial chamber/Temple/Paradise, streams of living water and bountiful springs of milk and honey flow out of the "lips of the Lord" and touch the lips of his loved ones, quenching their thirst and granting them immortal life, which is manifest in the blossoming and abundant fruitfulness of a holy life.

5.4 Fourth Ezra

Fourth Ezra (~100 CE?) is known as one of the earliest texts revealing a probable allegorical interpretation of the Song of Songs.[29] The book claims to be written by Ezra following the destruction of the first Temple by the Babylonians, but the historical context shows that it was written in fact a short time after the Romans destroyed the Second Temple in 70 CE.[30] The possible influence of

28 For more instances of the theme of fruitfulness in the Odes, cf. 1:5; 4:4; 7:1; 8:2; 14:6–7; 38:17–18.

29 As seen above, however, the earliest instances of an allegorical interpretation of the Canticle are in fact found in the NT, esp. the Johannine texts.

30 Technically, 4 Ezra, dating from the end of the first century CE, comprises only chapters 3–14 of the present work, which in its entirety is also known as 2 Esdras. Chapters 1–2,

the Canticle on 4 Ezra is seen in one impassioned passage where Ezra refers to Israel/Zion using a number of metaphors to symbolize the nation's election by God: she is "one vine," "one lily," "one river," "one dove," "one sheep," and "one people" (5:23–27). Though these images are fairly common in biblical literature, the designation of Israel as "lily" and "dove" hints at Cant 2:1–2, where the beloved is called "lily" (שושנה), and at Cant 2:14 and 5:2, where she is called the lover's "dove."[31] These parallels imply that the author of 4 Ezra is associating the people of Israel with the bride of the Canticle.[32]

Another possible nuptial passage is 4 Ezra 7:26, which the Vulgate renders as *apparebit sponsa et apparescens civitas* ("and the bride shall appear, as the city is appearing").[33] Though the Syriac is similar, the Ethiopic and Georgian versions, however, read "the city which now is not seen shall appear." Volkmar, followed by others, has convincingly argued that the Latin and Syriac texts are a corruption of the original Greek νῦν μὴ φαινομένη into νύμφη φαινομένη. If this observation is correct, then the nuptial allusion to the bride of the Canticle can not be sustained here with confidence from the original text.[34]

The most developed nuptial metaphor in 4 Ezra is found in 9:38–10:54. While grieving over the destruction of Jerusalem, Ezra has a vision of a woman who is mourning and weeping because she has lost her son. She tells Ezra that she lived barren and childless with her husband for thirty years, beseeching God night and day for a child. At the end of these 30 years He finally granted her a son, which caused her to "rejoice greatly" and "give great glory to the

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found only in the Latin versions and known as 5 Ezra, are a later 2nd century Christian addition. Chapters 15–16, also found only in the Latin versions and known as 6 Ezra, are also a later addition, probably dating to the third century. For introductions to 4 Ezra cf. B.M. Metzger, "The Fourth Book of Ezra" in *OTP* 1:517–24; M.E. Stone, "Esdras, Second Book of" in *ABD* 2:611–14; *ibid.*, *Fourth Ezra*, 1–47; N. Turner, "Esdras, Books of" in *IDB* 2:142; W.R. Goodman Jr., "Esdras, Books of" in *EDB* 423–24.

31 The same language is also used in Hosea: "lily" (שושנה) in Hos 14:5; "dove" (יונה) in Hos 7:11; 11:11; "bride" (כלה) in Hos 4:13–14, also Jer 2:32. Still, it is difficult to imagine that the writer of 4 Ezra would have employed such metaphorical language without having been acquainted with the Canticle. Israel is also compared to a dove in Pseudo-Philo (*Lib. ant. bib.* 39:5). Cf. Stone, *Fourth Ezra*, 129–30; Murphy, *The Song of Songs*, 13–14.

32 Stone, in "The Interpretation of Song of Songs in 4 Ezra" (230), adds that the use of the phrase "he will not move or arouse until that measure is fulfilled" in 4 Ezra 4:37 is essentially the same expression as the one used in Cant 2:7; 3:5; 8:4 ("do not stir up or awaken love until it is ready"), providing additional evidence for the allegorical exegesis of the Canticle in 4 Ezra.

33 The KJV follows the Vulgate and reads: "and the bride shall appear, and she coming forth shall be seen."

34 Cf. Stone, "The Interpretation of Song of Songs in 4 Ezra," 228; *ibid*. *Fourth Ezra*, 202.

Mighty One." When the son grew up, the woman found a wife for him and set a date for the "marriage feast" (9:43–47). But precisely when her son entered the marriage chamber he fell down and died, to the mother's infinite distress (10:1–4). Despite her pain, Ezra shows little sympathy for the woman, because her mourning for the loss of a son is nothing compared to the deep grief and affliction of Zion following the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple (10:5–8). Zion thus appears here as a personalized entity transcending the city of Jerusalem.[35] She mourns for the destruction of her city, and is "mother" of the whole world, as Ezra tells the woman: "For Zion, *the mother of us all*, is in deep grief and great affliction . . . you are sorrowing for one son, but we, the whole world, *for our mother*" (4 Ezra 10:7–8, emphasis added). Zion is troubled and in deep sorrow because she has now "lost the seal of her glory" (4 Ezra 10:20–24) – presumably the Temple.

As soon as Ezra finishes voicing his concern for Zion, the mourning woman's face "suddenly shone exceedingly, and her countenance flashed like lightning," and after uttering a loud cry she is transformed into "an established city and a place of huge foundations" (4 Ezra 10:25–27). The angel Uriel later explains that the mourning woman-turned-city was, in fact, Zion herself. The thirty years of barrenness are the "three thousand years in the world before any offering was offered in it," and the birth of the son symbolizes the city built by Solomon and the offering of sacrifices in the Temple. The son's youth and growing up was the period of residence in Jerusalem, and his death in the "wedding chamber" is the destruction of the city (4 Ezra 10:45–48). Yet this destruction is not final but carries the hope of a glorious restoration: Because Ezra was sincerely grieved and distressed at its tragic fate, he is granted a vision of the eternal city in "brilliance of her glory, and the loveliness of her beauty" (4 Ezra 10:50).

Nuptial symbolism is thus present in 4 Ezra by way of the female-mother-city figure of Zion.[36] Moreover, the love of God for his people is underlined in several instances. Ezra's own love for Israel and for creation pales when compared to the divine love for them: "For you come far short of being able to love my creation more than I love it" (4 Ezra 8:47; cf. 3:14; 5:33, 40). 4 Ezra's nuptial symbolism also displays a few particularities: the metaphor is unusual in that the identity of the woman's husband remains hidden (though it is clear that He can only be God). Another peculiarity is the lack of exact identity

35 This identity of Zion as mother who transcends the city of Jerusalem goes one extra step beyond the transcendence of Jerusalem vis-à-vis her inhabitants seen in Bar 4:12 (above, p. 28).

36 The theme of the mother-widow is also developed in 2:2–5, 15–17, 30–32.

between Zion and the city, with a distinction made between the figure of the mourning mother (Zion), her dead son (Jerusalem/the Temple), and Ezra who also sees himself as a son of Zion (cf. 10:8).

The historical dimension of the parable is evident. The woman's thirty years of barrenness, or 3,000 years before the building of the Temple, point back to the traditional Jewish reckoning of the creation of the world. This indicates that Zion is thought to have existed since the time of creation – a presupposition consistent with the affirmation stated elsewhere that God created the world for the sake of Zion/Israel (cf. 6:55, 59). But she only became fruitful when her son was born, that is, when Solomon built the city and Temple (cf. 10:46). While the death of the son clearly represents the destruction of the sanctuary and of the city, it is not entirely clear what is meant by the son's "wedding" that was so fatally interrupted. Perhaps it signifies the nation's expected redemption as described by the prophets (in nuptial terms, cf. Second/Third Isaiah) that was crushed with the city's destruction.

The historical aspect of the nuptial metaphor, spanning from the creation of the world through the construction of the Temple in 970 BCE to its destruction in 586 BCE (and in fact to its second destruction in 70 CE, the immediate context of 4 Ezra's composition), is developed in the rest of the book. Chapter 3, which opens the earliest part of 4 Ezra[37] also begins with the theme of the "desolation of Zion," recapitulating salvation history from the creation of Adam and the Garden of Eden (3:5–7). It goes through the covenants with Noah and Abraham, culminating with the Sinai covenant where God manifested Himself in glory and gave the Law to Israel (3:9–19). The divine faithfulness to the covenant continues to be manifested under the Davidic Kingdom, until the demise of the city at the hands of the Babylonians (3:23–28). There are also recurring references to the original paradise, to Adam, and to how his transgression brought evil and death into the world.[38] Sinai is recalled as the traditional place of God's covenant with Israel, where God declared to Moses

37 The first two and last two chapters are later additions, cf. above, p. 279 n. 30.

38 4 Ezra at times seems to hold to a doctrine very close to the Pauline doctrine of Original Sin: "For the first Adam, burdened with an evil heart, transgressed and was overcome, as were also all who were descended from him" (4 Ezra 3:21); "O Adam, what have you done? For though it was you who sinned, the fall was not yours alone, but ours also who are your descendants" (4 Ezra 7:118). Also 3:26; 4:30; 6:54–56; 7:11; 7:70; cf. Rom 5:12. For other references to the original paradise and to creation, cf. 4 Ezra 6:1–5; 38–55.

the secrets of the end of the times (14:4–5), and where the nation received the "law of life" (14:30).[39]

Another familiar theme is that of the living waters offered to Ezra which have a color "like fire" (14:38–39).[40] After drinking this supernatural water, Ezra is flooded with understanding and wisdom, and he proceeds to dictate 94 books over the following forty days and nights. Twenty four of these books are to be published (no doubt a reference to the 24 books of the Hebrew Bible), since in them is "the spring of understanding, the fountain of wisdom, and the river of knowledge" (4 Ezra 14:47).[41]

The author of Fourth Ezra portrays the eschatological redemption of Israel as a recapitulation of all the themes mentioned above. Redemption is compared to the birth pangs of a woman with child (4:40–42; 5:35, 45–50; 8:8–10; 16:38). It includes the eschatological hope of restored paradise "whose fruit remains unspoiled and in which are abundance and healing" (7:123). Indeed, it is for the righteous such as Ezra that

> paradise is opened, the Tree of Life is planted, the age to come is prepared, delight is provided, a city is built, rest is appointed, goodness is established and wisdom perfected beforehand. (4 Ezra 8:52)

Redemption is also portrayed as a new Exodus, accompanied with plagues and severe chastisement for wicked nations (15:10–12), and it anticipates the full restoration of Mount Zion when it will become manifest to all people (10:50–54; 13:35–36).

5.5 The Shepherd of Hermas

The *Shepherd of Hermas* (~100–160 CE), written sometime in the early second century CE, was for some time held in such high esteem that it was considered to be canonical scripture by some of the early Church Fathers. The Shepherd's

39 In the introduction, the deliverance from Egypt as foundation for the divine covenant is also emphasized (1:7–23), and Ezra himself receives a divine command from Mount Horeb (2:33).

40 Evoking the baptism of fire and the Holy Spirit of Matt 3:11.

41 Cf. 2 Bar. 59:7 where "the root of wisdom, and the riches of understanding, and the fount of knowledge" are some of the things revealed to Moses on Mount Sinai. Other examples of wisdom represented as fountains or streams are found in Prov 18:4; Sir 24:30; 1 En. 48:1; cf. Stone, *Fourth Ezra*, 441.

main interest is moral and ecclesiological, and its central message is a forceful exhortation to repentance for the Church.[42] The Church in the *Shepherd* is represented in the form of a woman at different stages of her life.[43] At first she is exceedingly old (Vis 1:2:2), signifying the pre-existence of the Church, for whom the world was created (Vis 2:4:1).[44] The woman's age and appearance also reflect the spiritual condition of Hermas: in the first vision, her frail and weak state represents his sloth and broken spirit caused by many worldly cares and sorrows (Vis 3:10:3; 11:2–4). In the second vision she appears as more youthful and joyful but still with the skin and hair of an aged woman (Vis 3:10:3; 3:12:1–3), signifying a vitality rekindled by a renewed encounter with the revelation of God. In the third vision, the woman appears still younger, noble and joyful, with a beautiful shape but still with the hair of an old woman, signifying how Hermas' spirit was renewed through complete repentance and the forgetting of his former worldly cares (Vis 3:10:5; 3:13:1–4). In this third vision, the lady shows Hermas a "great tower, built upon the waters, of splendid square stones" (Vis 3:2:4) which turns out to be the Church (Vis 3:3:3). When Hermas asks her why it is buit upon the waters, the woman refers him to an answer given previously in the first Vision:

> The God of powers, who by His invisible strong power and great wisdom has created the world, and by His glorious counsel has surrounded His creation with beauty, and by His strong word has fixed the heavens and laid the foundations of the earth upon the waters, and by His own wisdom and providence has created His holy Church. (Vis 1:3:4)

The origins of the Church are thus tied to the Genesis account of creation.[45] But the tower is also built upon the waters because Hermas' life will be "saved through water" (Vis 3:3:5) – a clear reference to baptism. Moreover, the main stones of the tower/Church are the apostles, bishops, teachers, and deacons (Vis 3:5:1). Later, the Church appears as a pure and spotless virgin "adorned as

42 For introductions to the *Shepherd*, cf. M.H. Shepherd, Jr, "Hermas, Shepherd of" in *IDB* 2:583–84; C. Osiek, "Hermas, Shepherd of" in *EDB* 577–79; Graydon F. Snyder, "Hermas' the Shepherd" in *ABD* 3:148.

43 On the Church as an old woman in Hermas and early Christian literature, cf. Daniélou, *Théologie du Judéo-Christianisme*, 318–26.

44 Cf. the similar statement in 4 Ezra 6:55, 59 where the world is said to have been created for the sake of Israel.

45 On the connection between creation and the Church, cf. Muddiman, "The Church in Ephesians, 2 Clement, and the Shepherd of Hermas," 120; Daniélou, *Théologie du Judéo-Christianisme*, 319–20.

if she were proceeding from the bridal chamber (νυμφών), clothed entirely in white" (Vis 4:2:1)[46] and having recently escaped a dreadful beast. The virgin represents the eschatological Church who has overcome the great final tribulation and the powers of evil, symbolized by the beast.

The theme of the tower and virgins returns in the ninth similitude. There, Hermas meets twelve beautiful virgins (Sim 9:2:3) who together with a group of men proceed to build an impressive tower upon a great rock, with a gate cut into it (Sim 9:3:1ff).[47] After the completion of this project, Hermas is invited to spend the night with the virgins (Sim 9:11:3). Though they make it clear that he is to sleep with them "as a brother and not as a husband" they nonetheless promise him: "we intend to abide with you, for we love you exceedingly" and then all proceed to kiss him (Sim 9:11:4). This show of affection notwithstanding, the love between them remains purely spiritual as they go on to spend the entire night in prayer. The following day the author declares that he "supped on the words of the Lord the whole night" (Sim 9:11:8). The Shepherd then reveals to Hermas that the rock and gate upon which the tower/Church is built is the Son of God, who existed since creation but only recently became manifest (Sim 9:12:1–3). As in the third vision, the tower is the Church, and the twelve virgins here are "holy spirits" and "the powers of the Son of God." Since the Son himself bears their names, "everyone who bears the name of the Son of God ought to bear the names also of these" (Sim 9:13:2–3). The virgins also represent twelve spiritual graces or virtues: faith, continence, fortitude, patience, simplicity, innocence, purity, cheerfulness, truth, understanding, harmony, and love (Sim 9:15:2). Hence even though the author carefully avoids any carnal interpretation of this scene, he depicts the imparting of grace and virtues to the narrator as occurring through a quasi-nuptial spiritual union with the twelve virgins/spirits: by "believing on the Lord through His Son," men are "clothed with these spirits" and become with them "one spirit, one body" (Sim 9:13:5). Moreover, here too the stones used to build the tower/Church are prophets, apostles and "teachers of the preaching of the Son of God" (Sim 9:15:4; cf. Vis 3:2:4). This recalls the Church of Ephesians "built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets" with Jesus Christ as chief

46 This imagery initially evokes Eph 5 and Rev 21, but it is not developed in the Shepherd, even lacking an explicit reference to Christ. On the relationship between the the concept of the Church in the *Shepherd* and in Ephesians, cf. Muddiman, "The Church in Ephesians, 2 Clement, and the Shepherd of Hermas," 116–21. For a more general study of the ecclesiology of the *Shepherd*, cf. Pernveden, *The Concept of the Church in the Shepherd of Hermas*.

47 The tower was already introduced in the 3rd vision (Vis 3:2:4).

cornerstone, and called a "building" that "grows into a holy temple in the Lord" out of living stones – the believers – "for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit" (Eph 2:20–22). The Shepherd's ecclesiology is shaped by a combination of nuptial and Temple/building images depicting the union of believers with the Son and the attendant impartation of virtues to them.

As for the historical dimension of our text, the Shepherd of Hermas completely bypasses the history of Israel: there are no references to the OT narrative, to Eden, Sinai or to the Temple. Nonetheless, to summarize the main points observed above, on the level of New Testament theology one finds in the Shepherd:

- A *Protological dimension*: the Church, associated with the Genesis creation account, exists since the creation of the world (Vis 1:3:4; 2:4:1).
- A *Christological dimension*: the font of salvation is found in the "powers" of the Son of God – twelve virtues represented by the twelve virgins, intended to be given to believers (Sim 9:13–15).[48]
- An *ecclesiological dimension*: the Church is represented as the woman whose age and features change according to the spiritual condition of the author (Vis 2:4; 3:11–13; 4:2:1), and also as a tower made up of stones that are the apostles, prophets, etc.
- A *mystical dimension*: this is seen in the need for Christians to repent of their sins and in the impartation of virtue to the Shepherd through the quasi-nuptial spiritual union with the virgins (Sim 9:11, 13).
- An *eschatological dimension*: the visions depicting the very old and weak woman who progressively becomes younger and more beautiful stir up the hope of seeing the glorious Church-bride of the end-times reaching perfection as a beautifully adorned virgin, clothed in white and proceeding from the bridal chamber (Vis 4:2:1).

5.6 The Second Epistle of Clement

The so-called Second Epistle of Clement, an anonymous Christian homily usually dated around the mid-second century (~130–160 CE),[49] includes three nuptial passages of interest. First, following a description of conversion as a

48 One notes the unusual attribution of a feminine trait to Christ in the twelve virgins.

49 Donfried, however, dates 2 Clement to 98–100 CE ("The Theology of Second Clement," 499; *The Setting of Second Clement in Early Christianity*, 1–15). For general introductions to 2 Clement cf. Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Fathers*, 2:191–210; R. Grant, "Clement, Second Epistle of" in *ABD* 1:1060–61; M.H. Shepherd Jr, "Clement, Epistles of" in *IBD* 1:649.

kind of new creation *ex nihilo* ("For He called us when we were not, and willed that out of nothing we should attain a real existence," 1:8), chapter 2 suddenly recalls Isaiah's barren woman who miraculously turned fruitful (54:1). Whereas Isaiah originally identified the woman as Israel, the wife of YHWH, for Pseudo-Clement she represents the Church:

> "Rejoice, thou barren, that bearest not, break forth and cry thou that travailest not; for she that is desolate has many more children than she that has a husband." In that he said, "Rejoice thou barren that bearest not," He referred to us, for our church was barren before that children were given to her. (2 Clem 2:1)

The author then explains that the travail of the woman represents the persevering prayers of Christians (v. 2), and the many children of the formerly barren woman signify the growth in numbers of the Church through the many converts that have joined her ranks.

> And in that He said, "For she that is desolate hath many more children than she that hath a husband," He means that our people seemed to be outcast from God, but now, through believing, have become more numerous than those who are reckoned to possess God. (2:3)

The second nuptial passage in 2 Clement quotes the Gospel of Thomas 22, where Jesus speaks of the unity of male and female as the way to enter the kingdom.[50] Pseudo-Clement expounds upon this passage while carefully avoiding any carnal or Gnostic interpretation:

> For the Lord Himself, being asked by someone when his kingdom would come, said: "When the two shall be one, and the outside as the inside, and the male with the female, neither male nor female." Now the two are one, when we speak truth among ourselves, and in two bodies there shall be one soul without dissimulation. And by the outside as the inside He means this: by the inside he means the soul and by the outside the body . . . And by the male with the female, neither male nor female, he means this; that a brother seeing a sister should have no thought of her as a female, and that a sister seeing a brother should not have any thought of him as a male. (2 Clem 12:2–6)

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50 A similar saying from the *Gospel of the Egyptians* is also preserved in Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* 3:13, 92:2; cf. Koester, *Ancient Christian Gospels*, 358–59.

The union whereby "the two shall be one" is thus paradoxically taken to be an exhortation to sexual abstinence and spiritual union: the "outside" and the "inside" denote the body and soul that are joined together.[51]

The dismissal of the literal/carnal meaning of the male-female union prepares the way for 2 Clement's last nuptial passage in chapter 14, which uses an allegorical interpretation of Genesis 1 (and an implicit allusion to Gen 2:24) to describe the "spiritual" Church. This passage bears some similarities with the Epistle to the Ephesians in its affirmation that the Church is pre-existent, body, and bride.[52] Pseudo-Clement contrasts here the true, spiritual and pre-existent Church that was "created before sun and moon" with a counterfeit group:

> If we do the will of God our Father, we shall be of the first Church, that is, spiritual, that hath been created before the sun and moon; but if we do not the will of the Lord, we shall be of the scripture that saith, "My house was made a den of robbers." (2 Clem 14:1)

The author associates the impious and disobedient with those who profaned the Temple and made it a "den of robbers," according to Jer 7:11. This is the verse that Jesus quotes in Matt 21:13 and Luke 19:46 when he cleanses the Temple. Given the context that follows in 2 Clement 14 (the union of flesh/Church and spirit/Christ, cf. below), it is possible that Pseudo-Clement is harmonizing the gospel accounts and alluding also to the Johannine account of the Temple cleansing, which does not quote Jer 7:11 but associates the incident with Jesus' body becoming the new Temple. The allusion to Jesus' body as anthropic temple would be consistent with the reference to the Pauline doctrine of the body of the believer as Temple of the Holy Spirit that follows. For Pseudo-Clement, the Church is also the "body of Christ," and he elucidates this with a quotation from Genesis 1:27 that recalls Ephesians 5:

> For the Scripture says, "God created man male and female;" the male is Christ, the female is the Church. And the Books and the Apostles plainly declare that the Church is not of the present, but from the beginning. For

51 Donfried ("The Theology of Second Clement," 492) notes that Pseudo-Clement "'degnosticizes' this text in terms which are completely on the moral and ethical plane."

52 On the Church as pre-existent bride of Christ in 2 Clement and on the relationship between 2 Clement and Ephesians, cf. Daniélou, *Théologie du Judéo-Christianisme*, 326–37; cf. Muddiman, "The Church in Ephesians, *2 Clement*, and the *Shepherd of Hermas*," 113–16.

> she was spiritual, as our Jesus also was, but was manifested in the last days that He might save us. (14:2).

In addition to using the familiar male-female allegory to portray Christ and the Church, Pseudo-Clement compares their relationship with the spirit-flesh distinction introduced in chapter 12. Since the Church is "spiritual and manifested in the flesh of Christ," believers must therefore "guard her in the flesh and defile her not" in order to receive the Holy Spirit (14:3). This is because "the flesh is the counterpart and copy of the spirit." Accordingly, one who corrupts the copy (the flesh) cannot partake of the original (Christ). It follows that one must "guard the flesh" in order to "partake of the spirit." These ecclesiological and Christological concerns translate into a practical exhortation to chastity:

> But if we say that the flesh is the Church and the spirit is Christ, then he that has shamefully used the flesh has shamefully used the Church. Such a one therefore shall not partake of the spirit, which is Christ. (14:4)

The flesh, therefore, associated with the Church, is capable of receiving life and immortality by being joined with the Holy Spirit, identified with Christ (14:5). Since the former is a counterpart/copy of the latter, the two are parts of the same spiritual entity. Pseudo-Clement astutely connects the mystical union of flesh-spirit with the ecclesial union of Church-Christ. This translates into a call for a sanctified used of the body, since acting impurely with the flesh means to defile the Church and reject Christ and the Holy Spirit. Combining this idea with the allusion to the Temple via the quotation of Jer 7:11, 2 Clement 14 is strongly reminiscent of Paul's exhortations against sexual immorality on the grounds that the body is the "temple of the Holy Spirit."[53] Indeed, Pseudo-Clement has already made use of this image, exhorting his readers to "preserve the flesh as the temple of God" (2 Clem 9:3). The cause of human flesh becoming a divine temple is Christ's salvation, effected through his incarnation.[54]

Nevertheless, this nuptial union between the flesh and the spirit, or between the Church and Christ, is now in a passing and temporary state that looks forward to fulfillment and eternal life in the world to come, as stated in an earlier chapter:

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53 1 Cor 3:16; 6:19; cf. section 4.4.3 below, p. 193.

54 "As Christ the Lord who saved us, though He was first a Spirit, became flesh, and thus called us, so shall we also receive the reward in this flesh" (2 Clem 9:5).

> The sojourning in the flesh in this world is but brief and transient, but the promise of Christ is great and wonderful, even the rest of the kingdom to come, and of life everlasting. (2 Clem 5:5)[55]

In summary, like Ephesians, 2 Clement associates the nuptial union of Christ and the Church with the original union of Adam and Eve. Both bridegroom and bride are pre-existent, originating from before time. The moment of the nuptials is not explicitly stated, but it can hardly be anything else than Christ's incarnation and paschal mystery, following the Pauline and Johannine traditions (cf. 2 Clem 1:2; 9:5). Thanks to this marriage, the Church becomes identified with Isaiah's barren woman turned fruitful with numerous converts. The kingdom comes when "two become one" and "male [is joined] with the female," but – unlike Philo's view – this does not denote a carnal return to the primeval unity of man and woman but rather the union of body and soul/spirit effected by pure living, which mysteriously corresponds to the union of the Church with Christ. Finally, this union is but a temporary foreshadow of the eschatological kingdom to come.

5.7 Summary: Pseudepigraphical Texts

It is not an easy task to draw a summary of the very diverse texts that we have surveyed in this section.[56] These were composed in widely divergent settings (Jewish and Christian) in a variety of genres (midrashic allegory, hymn book, apocalypse, collection of visions, homily), with each one employing a distinct form of nuptial symbolism. Nonetheless, despite these differences, we can observe a number of common features in this eclectic collection. First, regarding the different types of nuptial symbolism: In Fourth Ezra, the *Shepherd* and 2 Clement, the symbolism is collective or "ecclesial": following the tradition of the prophets, Zion is personified as woman/mother who is (implicitly) married to God, or the Church is personified as woman/virgin who is betrothed/married to Christ. The two latter works also make use of a *mystical* nuptial

55 Although not expressed in nuptial terms, the eschatological hope of 2 Clement is a recurring theme, borrowing many Pauline metaphors: he speaks of "departing out of this world" (5:1), compares life to a "long voyage," "race" and "contest" in which each must strive if he is to be crowned (7:1–5), and looks forward to a time "after we have gone out of the world (2 Clem 8:3) and to the great cosmic day of judgment (17:4–7).

56 For a tabular comparison of the late/post Second Temple pseudepigraphical texts studied above, cf. Appendix E.

imagery, which involves a personal union of the devout believer with the divinity, resulting in the latter's impartation of Wisdom and/or divine life to the former. We observe this in the virtue-giving union of the virgins with Hermas, and in the believer's flesh-spirit union reflecting the Church-Christ union in 2 Clement. The Odes of Solomon makes use of mystical symbolism only, showing no interest for the collective/ecclesial dimension of the nuptial union. It features a "classic" Christocentric nuptial theology where the protagonists – Christ and the believer – are joined by a "sacred kiss" in the "bridal chamber." *Joseph and Aseneth* stands apart with its original nuptial imagery which allegorically combines the mystical and ecclesial dimensions: while its literal reading is a romance between the two protagonists, it carries mystical undertones in Joseph's impartation of wisdom and divine life to Aseneth through their sacred embrace. It also adds an "ecclesial" dimension in its allegorical reading where Joseph stands for Israel and Aseneth for the pagan nations who are brought into communion with God through union with Joseph/Israel.

The historical dimension of the various nuptial dramas also displays a number of common threads despite important differences. Only one text, Fourth Ezra, which has perhaps the most subdued nuptial symbolism of all, retains more or less explicitly the narrative of Israel's history beginning with creation/Adam, with Sinai as the nation's great covenant-making moment, the Temple as Israel's privileged place of encounter with God, and the eschatological hope of the rebuilt eternal city at the end of days. The other works generally pay little regard to OT salvation history. But all of them refer to some protological moment, whether this be the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve, or the pre-existence of the Church at the time of creation. All point to a key "redemptive" event at the center of the nuptial mystery (usually Christ's incarnation or death in the Christian texts). All seek to prolong this event into time and into the life of believers, whether through a mystical and life-giving "sacred kiss," or the union of man and woman in the "mystery of the bridal chamber," or a union with virgins. Finally, most of our texts point to some eschatological fulfillment of their nuptial imagery, whether in hope of the eternal heavenly city (4 Ezra), of the pure glorious ecclesial virgin (Hermas), or of immortality (Odes, 2 Clement).[57]

57 Although *Joseph and Aseneth* lacks eschatological momentum, it makes use of apocalyptic and eschatological imagery akin to that which is found in the book of Revelation, as noted above (p. 275).

CHAPTER 6

Nuptial Symbolism in Rabbinic Literature

6.1 The Song of Songs and its Allegorical Interpretation

From the second century onwards, the book that stands out as the symbol *par excellence* of the marriage between God and his people is the *Song of Songs*. Traditionally attributed to King Solomon,[1] the Canticle is now generally believed to have been written as an erotic love song portraying the nuptials between Solomon and the daughter of Pharaoh, or between a young shepherd and a country maiden.[2] Yet this literal meaning was eclipsed for most of the Song's history of interpretation, becoming instead primarily known as the allegorical description of the courtship and union between God and his mystical bride. Christian writers reinterpreted the Song in light of the NT nuptial passages to have it denote the marriage of Christ and the Church – an idea which eventually became the foundation of Christian mysticism.[3]

Yet even though the nuptial relationship between God and Israel is attested as early as the time of Hosea, it is difficult to trace back the beginnings of the allegorization of the Canticle. It is not until the beginning of the second century CE at Yavneh that we hear of Rabbi Akiva (d. 135) defending the sanctity

1 Considerations of literary themes, geographical data and philological arguments have been of little help in drawing any confident conclusions about the authorship and date or social provenance of the Song. There are valid grounds for both the oldest and the youngest dating estimates – from genuine Solomonic authorship in the mid-tenth century BCE to a post-exilic Persian period date – though a majority of commentators tend to favor the later date. For full treatments of this topic, cf. Pope, *Song of Songs*, 22–33; Murphy, *The Song of Songs*, 3–5.

2 A more recent view proposes that the Song is an ancient cultic poem modeled on pagan fertility worship, representing the union of gods such as Tammuz and Ishtar, and adapted to represent the sacred marriage of God and Israel. See Pope, *Song of Songs*, 145–153; Meek in the *Interpreter's Bible*, v. 5; Kramer, "The Sacred Marriage and Solomon's Song of Songs," in *The Sacred Marriage Rite: Aspects of Faith, Myth, and Ritual in Ancient Sumer* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1969); Nissinen, "Song of Songs and Sacred Marriage," in *ibid. Sacred Marriages: The Divine-Human Sexual Metaphor from Sumer to Early Christianity*, 173–218.

3 For a survey of the history of exegesis of the Song and the overwhelming predominance of the allegorical interpretation over the literal from the third to the eighteenth century, see Pope, *Song of Songs*, pp. 89–229.

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of the Canticle against some who disputed its canonicity, exclaiming that "all the ages are not worth the day on which the Song of Songs was given to Israel; for all the Writings are holy, but the Song of Songs is the Holy of Holies."[4] The same Rabbi Akiva, according to the Tosefta, went as far as denying the world to come to those who read the Canticle in a profane context.[5] If these tannaitic sayings are to be held reliable, their rhetorical force must attest to at least a respectable tradition of the allegorical exegesis of the Canticle in the early second century CE. Other clues indicate that such allegorical exegesis may have existed earlier than Akiva's time: First, we recall how 4 Ezra casually refers to Israel as "lily" (5:24), "dove" (5:26) and (possibly) "bride" (7:26), in an apparent late first century testimony to the symbolic use of the Song's language.[6] Second, the influence of the Canticle on passages in the NT, where the Canticle's lover seems to be identified with Jesus and the beloved with the community of disciples, is in effect a first century allegorical interpretation of the Song, even pre-dating 4 Ezra.[7] Third, the fact that fragments of the Canticle were found among the Dead Sea Scrolls[8] also speaks in favor of an existing religious interpretation of the Song already in the days of the Qumran sect. Since the sectarians are not known to have had a great interest for marriage or erotic literature, and given the ascetic and religious nature of their writings, one wonders why they would have held a book replete with such sexual imagery in their library unless they believed it had some sanctified status.[9] Finally, some scholars have argued that the very inclusion of the

4 *M. Yadaim* 3.6; cf. also *t. Yadaim* 2.14; *b. Megillah* 7a; *CantR* 1:1 §11 (Simon 18). On the reception of the Song of Songs into the Canon, see Lacoque, "L'insertion du Cantique des Cantiques dans le Canon."

5 *T. Sanhedrin* 12.10: "Rabbi Akiva says, 'Whoever sings the Song of Songs with tremulous voice in a banquet hall and (so) treats it as a sort of ditty [*demin zemer*] has no share in the world to come.'" (cf. also *b. Sanhedrin* 101a).

6 Cf. section 5.4 above, pp. 279–280.

7 The allegorical interpretation of the Song in the NT would even date back to the early part of the first century if the sayings of Jesus and John the Baptist identifying Jesus with the Song's bridegroom are historical (cf. Matt 9:14–15; 25:1–13; Mark 2:18–20; Luke 5:33–35; John 3:29).

8 Cf. Abegg, Flint, Ulrich, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Bible*. Flint, "The Book of Canticles in the Dead Sea Scrolls" in *Perspectives on the Song of Songs/Perspektiven der Hoheliedauslegung*, 96–104.

9 Alexander ("The Song of Songs as Historical Allegory," p. 15 n. 3) states: "[The presence of fragments of the Song in the DSS] suggests that already by the first century BCE the book was being read allegorically, since it is hardly conceivable, given the religious outlook of the group behind the Scrolls, that they would have read the text literally."

Canticle into the canon of Scripture assumes its allegorical reading.[10] In any case, regardless of the origins of the Song's allegorical reading, we know that it soon became the "center of gravity" of both rabbinic and patristic nuptial symbolism. The present chapter is dedicated to the former.

Before turning our attention to the Sages, a brief but important methodological note is in order: As mentioned in the introduction, the primary focus of the present book is theological, being chiefly interested in scanning the conceptual development of nuptial imagery in early Jewish and Christian thought. It does not claim to make a significantly new contribution to the study of rabbinic literature *per se*. This chapter merely aims at providing a descriptive compendium of the use of the Song of Songs and other Scriptural nuptial passages in the rabbinic texts, especially when related to our "four moments." It also intends to examine instances of interconnection between the "four moments" and other related motifs such as the cosmic symbolism of the Sinai revelation and Temple, or the nuptial role of the Torah and *Shekhinah*. The main goal is thus to establish what the sources say *in themselves* for the purpose of situating them within the development of the nuptial theology that was seen so far and that will be sketched out more systematically in the last chapter. In other words, the value of chapter 6 will especially become evident in chapter 7.

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10 Parente ("The Canticle of Canticles in Mystical Theology," 144) remarks: "It is exactly its spiritual and allegorical interpretation that has vindicated to the Canticle of Canticles a divine origin and a place among the *canonical* books in both Jewish and Christian tradition. Otherwise, how could a book be considered as divinely inspired for our instruction and edification in which the name of God is never mentioned and no religious or supernatural idea ever seems to occur? How could the Canticle of Canticles be numbered among the sacred books of both the Synagogue and the Christian Church if it were to be understood simply in its literal sense as an epithalamium, a melodramatic interpretation of the delights and anxieties of the wedded love of Solomon and Pharaoh's daughter or, perhaps, a country maiden?" Feuillet ("Le Cantique des Cantiques et la tradition biblique," 706–733), argues that the Song of Songs reflects Israel's biblical and prophetic tradition: the bridegroom (YHWH) is portrayed as king and shepherd; the bride wishes he were her brother and teacher; she is associated with the bridegroom's flock and compared to the city of Jerusalem, to a land and to a garden. Feuillet also mentions the themes of sleep, of vigilance, of awakening, and of finding and seeking that all find parallels in the prophetic literature. He concludes: "par toutes ses fibres ce poème d'amour se rattache à la littérature prophétique; au point de vue théologique aux passages qui traitent du mariage de Yahweh avec Israël; aux points de vue psychologique et historique aux écrits prophétiques contemporains de l'exil ou des premiers temps de la restauration" (732). See also Feuillet, *Le Cantique des Cantiques – Étude de théologie biblique et réflexions sur une méthode d'exégèse*, 38–87.

The present chapter, therefore, intends to examine each midrashic compilation as a *literary unit*; it does *not* claim to:

- study the processes of formation of texts;
- enter into the question of particularities and differences between rabbinical schools, or distinguish between earlier and later rabbinic traditions within given texts;
- seek out evidences of polemical debate against Christian claims, or deal with the intertextual question as to whether rabbinic traditions either preceded early Christian nuptial traditions or responded to them.

6.2 Tannaitic Midrashim

Although it took quite some time for complete systematic Jewish allegorical expositions of the Canticle to appear, Tannaitic sources already bear witness to the presence of many midrashim that matter-of-factly associate the Song's romantic verses with the history of Israel.[11] This association is already evident in the Mishnah, in a saying attributed to Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel:

> "Go forth and look, O ye daughters of Zion, on King Solomon, with the crown wherewith his mother hath crowned him on the day of his espousals, and on the day of the joy of his heart" [Cant 3:11]. "The day of the espousals" refers to the day on which the Law was given, and "the day of the joy of his heart" was that when the building of the Temple was completed. May it soon be rebuilt in our days![12]

According to Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel, the day of the giving of the Torah on Sinai is identified with the Canticle's "day of King Solomon's espousals," and the completion of the Temple is the "day of the joy of his heart." This association

11 Cf. Lieberman, *Mishnat Shir ha-Shirim*; Green, "The Children in Egypt and the Theophany at the Sea;" *ibid., Keter: The Crown of God in Early Jewish Mysticism*, 78–87; *ibid.*, "The Song of Songs in Early Jewish Mysticism;" *ibid.*, "Shekhinah, the Virgin Mary and the Song of Songs."

12 *M. Ta'anit* 4.8. As we will see, the "day of Solomon's espousals" and "day of gladness of his heart" are often associated with the Sinai theophany, the erection of the Tabernacle, and the day when the Temple was completed. Cf. *Sifra* 9:1 (§99), *LamR* Proem 33 (Cohen 59); *LevR* 20:10 (Israelstam 261–62); *PRK* 1:3, 26:9 (Br./Kap.12, 406); *b. Ta'anit* 26a; *CantR* 3:11 (Simon 173–75); *TgCant* 3:11.

between the Song, the Sinai theophany and the Temple service sets the stage for two main threads of nuptial traditions in the Tannaitic midrashim: in the first, the sages use verses from the Canticle and other OT nuptial passages to attribute a nuptial significance to the events of the Exodus. In the second, more mystical tradition, we discover claims that the Song of Songs itself was divinely given to Israel at either the Red Sea or at Sinai.

The association of the Exodus with the Song is found in the midrashim expounding upon the narrative of Israel's wanderings from Egypt to the Promised Land, namely the two *Mekhiltot* on Exodus, and the *Sifre* on Numbers and Deuteronomy. As Gershon Cohen has noted, when the rabbis located the consecration of the marriage between God and His bride at the time of the Exodus and at Sinai, they were "merely amplifying what they had already found in Scripture," namely, the vow of fidelity that God demanded of His people as expressed in the prophets.[13] The use of the Canticle to describe the redemptive events of the Exodus shows that the Tannaitic sages read it as a sacred love poem between God and the *Knesset Israel* that allegorically depicted in romantic language God's salvific deeds. This is, no doubt, one good reason that would have strengthened R. Akiva's conviction that the Song was the "Holy of Holies" of Scripture.

In addition to its allegorical reading associated with the Exodus and Sinai, a second, more mystical Tannaitic tradition may well constitute the essence of the Song's identification with the Holy of Holies. Rabbi Akiva spoke of the day when the Canticle was *given* to Israel ("יום שניתן בו שיר השירים לישראל"),[14] an expression generally used to denote the giving of the Torah. As we will see, some rabbis believed that God gave the Song of Songs to Israel, either at the Red Sea or at Mount Sinai, as a secret mystical level of Torah.[15] On the basis of another statement attributed to Akiva ("had the Torah not been given to Israel, the world could have been conducted by the Song of Songs"),[16]

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13 Cohen, "The Song of Songs and the Jewish Religious Mentality," 11.

14 *M. Yadaim* 3.6. Cf. above, p. 293 n. 4.

15 In Green's words ("Shekhinah, the Virgin Mary and the Song of Songs," 3), Rabbi Akiva held that "the Song of Songs was first spoken – a living dialogic event that took place among God, the angels, and the community of Israel – at Sinai." Fishbane (*The Kiss of God*, 15) concurs: "The rabbis thus place the Exodus and, particularly the events at Sinai at the center of their national reading of the Song." Cf. Green, "The Song of Songs in Early Jewish Mysticism," 52; *ibid.* "The Children in Egypt and the Theophany at the Sea," 452–53.

16 *Agadat Shir Hashirim* 5, ed. S. Schechter (Cambridge, 1896), line 22, quoted in Green, "Shekhinah, the Virgin Mary and the Song of Songs," 8. Green ("The Song of Songs in Early Jewish Mysticism" 52, 62 n. 8) suggests that this line should read *ilu lo nittenah torah, kedai hayyetah* [=*hayah*] *shir hashirim linhog et ha-olam*.

Green suggests that Akiva saw not only Sinai as the original setting of the Song but also the Canticle as "the heart of revelation, the secret love-gift that God gave to Israel along with the more public Torah of history, law, and covenant."[17] In the line of this mystical tradition, Lieberman noted close connections between the Tannaitic midrashim of the Song of Songs and the esoteric mysticism of the *Shiur Qomah*. While the midrashim use the figure of the Canticle's beloved (Cant 5:10–15) to describe God, the *Shiur Qomah* amplifies this midrashic technique to arrive at its fantastic measurements of the limbs of the divine body.[18] This association of the Song of Songs with the theophanies of the Red Sea and Sinai – and with midrashim equating the theophanies with the appearance of the divine *merkavah* to Israel – led Lieberman to conclude: "The midrash of the Song of Songs, *ma'aseh merkavah*, and *shiur komah* are one and the same."[19]

In this section, I will examine two Tannaitic texts: the *Mekhilta* and *Sifre Devarim*.

6.2.1 Mekhilta de-Rabbi Ishmael

The *Mekhilta de-Rabbi Ishmael* is one of the oldest midrashim, with its final redaction usually dated to the second half of the third century.[20] *Mekh* is a commentary on Exod 12:1–23:19, 31:12–17, and 35:1–3, covering the story of Israel's escape from Egypt beginning with the Passover and crossing of the Red Sea, the first wanderings through the desert and feeding of the manna, the Sinai theophany and giving of the Ten Commandments, and most of the covenant code, with two additional short exhortations on the observance of the Sabbath. I will examine the nuptial passages as they appear

17 Green, "Shekhinah, the Virgin Mary and the Song of Songs," 3; *ibid.* "The Song of Songs," 52.

18 Both Scholem and Lieberman have argued for the antiquity of the Shiur Qomah (second century CE). Scholem claimed this on the basis of its possible influence on the second century Valentinian Gnostic Marcus and on Origen's knowledge that Jews deferred the study of the Song until they had reached spiritual maturity, pointing to the existence of a set of esoteric traditions surrounding it (cf. Lawson. p. 23; Scholem, *Jewish Gnosticism*, 40). Lieberman has shown how the Shiur Qomah's identification of the Song's lover (Cant 5:10–16) with God at the Red Sea or at Mt. Sinai matches similar Tannaitic traditions (cf. Lieberman, "Mishnat Shir ha-Shirim"). Cohen (*The Shiur Qomah: Liturgy and Theurgy in pre-Kabbalistic Jewish Mysticism*, 51–71) disputes this early dating.

19 Lieberman, *Mishnat Shir ha-Shirim*, 126. Also quoted in Elior, *The Three Temples*, 160.

20 On the dating of *Mekh*, cf. Strack/Stemberger, *Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash*, 277–79.

in the *Mekhilta*, also mentioning parallel passages from the *Mekhilta de-Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai* when appropriate.[21]

6.2.1.1 The Passover (*Pisḥa*)

In *Pisḥa* 5 (Laut. 1:33),[22] R. Matia b. Heresh refers to the moment of Israel's redemption – when the Passover lamb was slaughtered and eaten on the 14th of Nissan (Exod 12:6) – as the "*time of love*"[23] spoken of by Ezekiel 16:8 when God passed by Jerusalem (personified as a naked and destitute maiden), spread His wing over her, covered her nakedness, swore an oath and entered into a (nuptial) covenant with her. The girl's former state, *naked and bare* according to Ezekiel, points to Israel's lack of religious deeds for R. Matia, a lack that was remedied by the paschal sacrifice and circumcision. Ezekiel's maiden was *struggling in her blood*, and when God saw her He said to her: "*I said to you in your blood, 'Live!'* " (Ezek 16:6). R. Matia associates this blood with the *blood of the covenant* by which *God set captives free* in Zech 9:11, that is, with the blood of the Passover sacrifice and circumcision (Laut. 1:34).[24] In the same context, R. Eliezer ha-Kappar illustrates Israel's chastity in Egypt with Cant 4:12, where the Shulamite who is a *garden locked* and *fountain sealed* refers to the chaste behavior of Israel's men and women (Laut. 1:35).[25] The Passover is thus presented as a nuptial event, with Israel identified as both Ezekiel's maiden and the Canticle's bride.

In *Pisḥa* 7 (Laut. 1:52), Abba Hanin in the name of R. Eliezer associates the commandment to eat the Passover in haste (Exod 12:11) with the haste of the *Shekhinah* to deliver Israel from the Egyptians, and the *Shekhinah* is identified with the lover of Cant 2:8–9, *leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon*

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21 The *Mekhilta de-Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai*, traditionally thought to be a work from the school of R. Akiva, is usually dated somewhat later than the *Mekhilta de-RI* – perhaps the early 4th century. For a general introduction to the text, cf. Nelson, *Mekhilta de-Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai*, xi–xxv; Strack/Stemberger, 283. The texts I will use are Lauterbach's edition of *Mekh de-RI*, and Nelson's *Mekh de-RaShBY*, which essentially follows the Epstein/Melamed critical edition, with the added benefit of a parallel English translation.

22 All further references from the *Mekhilta* are from Lauterbach unless otherwise noted.

23 In the present chapter, I will italicize quotations from Scripture in order to distinguish them from the midrashim.

24 The identification of the blood of circumcision with the maiden's blood in Ezek 16:6 is also seen in *Mekh Pisḥa* 16, 1:141; *PRK* 5:6, 7:4 (Br./Kap.98, 143); *CantR* 1:5 §1 (Simon 51, Dunski 29).

25 Cf. also *LevR* 32:5, *PRK* 11:6.

the hills, and *standing behind our wall*.[26] The same "*leaping*" is also equated with God skipping over the houses of his children as He goes to smite the Egyptian first-born and sees the blood of the Passover smeared on the doors of the Israelites (Exod 12:13; 1:57).[27] The Mekhilta thus portrays the Passover in terms of the romantic drama of the Canticle, with God/the *Shekhinah* and Israel respectively portrayed as the Song's lover and beloved.

In *Pisḥa* 13 (Laut. 1:106), a similar allegory is made by associating the events of the Exodus with other nuptial texts: In a discussion on the Israelites' plunder in Egypt and at the Red Sea, the stolen articles of gold and silver (Exod 12:35–36) are identified with the "*ornaments of ornaments*" (עֲדִי עֲדָיִים) of Ezekiel's maiden prior to her divine betrothal (Ezek 16:7). The stolen Egyptian goods are also tied to the Canticle: the plunder at the sea is identified with the Shulamite's *circlets of gold* (תּוֹרֵי זָהָב) and the plunder of Egypt with her *studs of silver* (נְקֻדּוֹת הַכָּסֶף, Cant 1:11). Hence the plunder taken from the Egyptians is seen as a nuptial gift from the Bridegroom to His bride.[28] Moreover, in *Pisḥa* 14 (Laut. 1:109), the 600,000 Israelite men leaving Egypt (Exod 12:37) are equated with the sixty mighty men accompanying Solomon's couch as it comes out of the desert, perfumed with myrrh and frankincense and on the way to his wedding (Cant 3:7–11).

Still within the context of the Passover, an eschatological perspective of the covenant is added in *Pisḥa* 14 (Laut. 1:114–15). In a discussion on the "*hosts of the Lord*" coming out of Egypt (Exod 12:41), the *Shekhinah*'s faithful presence among Israel – even in the midst of exile – is underlined: "Wherever Israel was exiled, the *Shekhinah*, as it were, went into exile with them." The text then opens a window into the future by listing the nation's successive exiles from Egypt to Babylon, Elam and Edom. The presence of the *Shekhinah* with Israel at every low point of her troubled history is the guarantee that God has not abandoned His bride. Israel's vicissitudes will conclude with the *Shekhinah*'s eschatological return from the captivity of Edom with her, portrayed as another nuptial

26 The Midrash is apparently unconcerned by the inconsistency of identifying the feminine *Shekhinah* with the male lover of the Canticle.

27 The association between God showing himself over the houses of the Israelites in Egypt and the beloved of Cant 2:8–9 is also found in *Sifre Num* 115 (Neusner 11:178; Horowitz 125).

28 *Mekh de-RaShBY* (*Pisḥa* 16:1) also refers to Cant 1:11 but makes a different use of Ezek 16, tying the lesser plunder of Egypt and greater plunder at the Sea with the maiden's growth: "*And you continued to grow up* (Ezek 16:7) [refers to] the plunder of Egypt. *Until you attained womanhood* (*ibid.*) [refers to] the plunder at the sea." Cf. *CantR* 1:11 §1.

moment – the return of the beloved and his bride from "Lebanon," as depicted in Cant 4:8 (אִתִּי מִלְּבָנוֹן כַּלָּה אִתִּי מִלְּבָנוֹן תָּבוֹאִי).[29]

6.2.1.2 Israel at the Red Sea (*Beshallah/Shirata*)

Following their flight from Egypt, the Israelites are caught in a panic between the pursuing Egyptians and the Red Sea (Exod 14:9–10). In *Beshallah* 3 (Laut. 1:211), the frightened people are described as a dove fleeing from a hawk (the Egyptians behind them) and about to enter a cleft in the rock where there is a hissing serpent (the Sea before them). This desperate situation causes them to set their mind on prayer, and God's reply comes in the form of the praise of the Song's lover to his bride: "*O my dove, in the clefts of the rock . . . let me see your face, let me hear your voice; for your voice is sweet, and your face is lovely*" (Cant 2:14). The "voice" of the bride/dove in the Canticle refers here to Israel's prayer, and her "face" is her study of Torah or good deeds.[30]

As the crossing of the sea concludes, in *Beshallah* 7 (Laut. 1:254) a window into the future is again opened, revealing that the deliverance from Egypt is a sign of the eschatological ingathering of the exiles, expressed by the image of the beloved and bride coming out of Lebanon (Cant 4:8). The nuptial meaning of the future redemption is further emphasized by its identification with the eschatological betrothal spoken of by Hosea 2:21–22: "*I will betroth you to Me forever . . .*"[31]

The Israelites then begin to sing the Song of the Sea (Exod 15:1). In *Shirata* 1 (Laut. 11:11), God is identified as the beloved of Cant 5:10–15 ("דּוֹדִי צַח וְאָדוֹם").[32] The same analogy returns in *Shirata* 3 (Laut. 11:24–28) with an exegesis of Exod 15:2 (זֶה אֵלִי וְאַנְוֵהוּ) that is particularly rich in nuptial allusions. R. Eliezer relates that what a common maidservant saw at the sea was more exalted than

29 Cf. also *Sifre Num* 84 (Neusner 11:74; Horowitz 83), *ibid.* 161 (Horowitz 223).

30 Cf. *Mekh de-RaShBY Beshallah* 22:2 (Nelson 98; Ep./Mel. 55). The Midrash's commentary on Israel at the Sea is interspersed with other references to the Song of Songs: When Moses is told to lift up his rod to separate the waters (Exod 14:16–19), the midrash recalls how God brought streams out of the rock, associating them with the Song's *fountain of gardens* and *well of living waters* (Cant 4:15) (*Beshallah* 5, 1:225; cf. *Mekh de-RaShBY Beshallah* 24:2). As the Sea returns and drowns the Egyptian chariots, horsemen and army (Exod 14:28), Mekhilta recalls the Canticle's description of the Shulamite as the "*mare of Pharaoh's chariots*" (Cant 1:9), explaining that Pharaoh first rode a stallion and then a mare in pursuit of the Israelites (*Beshallah* 7, 1:247; cf. *Mekh de-RaShBY Beshallah* 26:4; *CantR* 1:9 §4).

31 Cf. *Mekh de-RaShBY Beshallah* 26:6 (Nelson 118; Ep./Mel. 70).

32 As mentioned above (p. 297, n. 18), the esoteric *Shiur Qomah* uses the same text to describe the deity. Cf. *Mekh de-RaShBY Shirata* (Nelson 123; Ep./Mel. 73).

the visions of God seen by Isaiah and Ezekiel (i.e. the *Merkavah* vision of Ezek 1). The Midrash then develops a sustained dialogue between Israel and the nations that begins and ends with the beloved and bride, God and Israel, communing together in the Temple.[33] Rabbi Akiva recalls how the nations of the world asked Israel:

> *What is your beloved more than another beloved, that you thus adjure us?* (Cant 5:9), that you are so ready to die for Him, and so ready to let yourselves be killed for Him? For it is said: "*Therefore do the maidens love Thee*" (עֲלָמוֹת אֲהֵבוּךָ) (Cant 1:3), meaning, they love thee unto death (אהבוך עד מות). And it is also written: "*nay but for Your sake we are killed all day long*" (Ps 44:23). "You are handsome, you are mighty, come and intermingle with us." (*Shirata* 3, Laut. 11:26)[34]

The argument rests upon a word play between "*the maidens*" (עֲלָמוֹת) and "unto death" (עד מות). The inquiry of the daughters of Jerusalem, asking the bride why she loves her beloved so much (Cant 5:9), is turned into the nations asking Israel why they love their divine Bridegroom to the point of dying for Him. To the Gentiles' ensuing invitation to come and intermingle with them, Israel replies with the praise of God in the words of Cant 5:10 (דּוֹדִי צַח וְאָדוֹם...). The beauty of the divine Lover is such that the nations wish to join themselves to Israel, asking: "*Where has your beloved gone, O fairest among women? Where has your beloved turned aside, that we may seek him with you?*" (Cant 6:1). But Israel jealously guards the Bridegroom for herself: "You can have no share in Him, but

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33 This dialogue is centered around the meaning of the first words of the Song of the Sea: "*I will glorify Him*" (אַנְוֵהוּ). R. Ishmael asks: How could man possibly add glory to God? R. Yosi the Damascene proposes that Israel will give glory to God by building a beautiful Temple (בית המקדש נאה) for Him. He arrives at this idea by means of the similitude between "אַנְוֵהוּ" and the word נוה (dwelling), taking it to designate the Temple: "I will make for Him a beautiful Temple (בית המקדש נאה) – for the word נוה designates the Temple as in the passage and laid waste His habitation" (ואת נוהו השמו). In quoting Ps 79:7 (כִּי אָכַל אֶת־יַעֲקֹב וְאֶת־נָוֵהוּ הֵשַׁמּוּ), *Mekh* turns "Jacob's habitation" into "God's habitation" = the Temple. It then refers to Isaiah's (33:20) description of Jerusalem as a "peaceful habitation" (נָוֶה שַׁאֲנָן) to further support the view that אַנְוֵהוּ refers to the Jerusalem Temple. The same use of these verses returns in *Shirata* 9 (11:70), associating Exod 15:13 (נֵהַלְתָּ בְעָזְּךָ אֶל־נְוֵה קָדְשֶׁךָ) with the Temple. Cf. *Mekh de-RaShBY Shirata* 29:1.

34 The willingness to be martyred for the sake of divine love as expressed in Ps 44:23 is also related to the commandment of the *Shema* to love God with all of one's heart, soul and strength in *m. Berakhot* 9:5 and *Sifre Deut* 32 (Hammer 59). Cf. Fishbane, *The Kiss of God*, 3–12 and the discussion above, p. 230f.

My beloved is mine and I am his (Cant 2:16), *I am my beloved's and my beloved is mine* (Cant 6:3)."[35] Other sages add that the text refers to Israel accompanying God into His Temple. This is illustrated with the parable of a king who followed his son on numerous trips to faraway countries, representing the *Shekhinah* following Israel from Canaan to Egypt, then out of Egypt, through the sea, and into the wilderness, "until they brought Him with them to His holy Temple. And so it also says: *Scarcely had I passed by them, when I found the one I love*" (Cant 3:4) (Laut. II:27). The rest of the Canticle's verse is revealing: "*I held him and would not let him go, until I had brought him to the house of my mother, and into the chamber of her who conceived me*." Hence the deliverance from the Egyptians at the Red Sea becomes the occasion for a dialogue in which Israel explains to the nations her willingness to be martyred for the sake of her divine Lover. Her ultimate desire is to be united with Him in His holy Temple, equated with the house and (nuptial) chamber of the Shulamite's mother.[36]

Following other references to the Canticle in the midrashic exposition of the Song of the Sea,[37] *Vayassa* 1 (Laut. II:85) identifies the moment when Israel

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35 The anthropomorphic depiction of God continues in the commentary on Exod 15:3 (ה׳ אִישׁ מִלְחָמָה ה׳ שְׁמוֹ). Developing on the image of the handsome young man of Cant 5:10, Mekhilta describes God as a "mighty hero doing battle" when He delivered Israel at the Sea. This is contrasted with His appearance at Sinai (Exod 24:10) as "an old man full of mercy" (*Shirata* 4, Laut. II:31). The Lord as a *man of war* is also identified with the revelation of the divine glory to Isaiah (Isa 6:3), with the כבוד returning to Ezekiel's eschatological Temple under the form of the divine *Merkavah* (Ezek 43:2), and with Daniel's Ancient of Days sitting on His throne (II:34). Cf. *Mekh de-RaShBY Shirata* 30:1 (Nelson 132–34; Ep./Mel. 81–82); also *Mekh de-RI BaHodesh* 5 (Laut. II:231). On the two theophanies of God as young warrior-lover/compassionate old judge appearing to Israel at the Sea/Mount Sinai, cf. Green, "The Children in Egypt and the Theophany at the Sea," 452–56.

36 *Mekh de-RaShBY* (*Shirata* 29:1) expounds Exod 15:2 in an almost identical fashion, with two significant additions: first, there is an extra identification of God with the Song's lover, who is "*like an apple tree among trees of the forest*" (Cant 2:3), and of Israel with the beloved, who is "*like a lily among thorns*" (Cant 2:2). Second, the *chamber of her who conceived me* (הורתי) is identified not only with the Temple but also with the Tent of Meeting by means of another word play between "*her who conceived me*" (הורתי) and Law/Instruction (הוראה): "this חֶדֶר הוֹרָתִי [refers to] the Tent of Meeting, for from there Israel was held accountable for the Law (בהוראה)." (Nelson 129–31; Ep./Mel. 78–80).

37 In *Shirata* 6 (on Exod 15:7–8), the Egyptians are identified with the foxes of Cant 2:15 (II:50, cf. *Mekh de-RaShBY Shirata* 32:2; *CantR* 2:15), and the miraculous streams of sweet water that came out of tubes during the crossing of the Sea are associated with the streams of Cant 4:15 (II:51, cf. *Mekh de-RaShBY Shirata* 32:3; ARN-A 33). In *Shirata* 9 (on Exod 15:13), the sixty myriads of the Exodus are identified with the sixty queens of Cant 6:8, and God's "*holy habitation*" (נָוֶה קָדְשֶׁךָ) with the Temple (II:69–70). *Mekh de-RaShBY* (*Shirata* 34:1)

goes into the wilderness (Exod 15:22) as the time of the betrothal between God and Israel spoken of by Jeremiah (2:2) when he wrote of "*the kindness of your youth, the love of your betrothal, when you went after Me in the wilderness.*"

6.2.1.3 Israel at Sinai (*BaHodesh*)

The nuptial motif returns in *BaHodesh* 1 (Laut. II:193–94) as Israel arrives at Sinai and sets camp before the mountain (Exod 19:1). A discussion on the vicissitudes of Israel's history and the tragedy of the exile leads to another citation of the Song: "*If you do not know, O fairest among women, follow in the tracks of the flock, and pasture your kids beside the shepherds' tents*" (Cant 1:8). The verse is elucidated in a story about Yohanan ben Zakkai. The rabbi had once seen a Jewish girl in Judea picking barley-corn out of the excrements of an Arab's horse. Her humiliating situation became the occasion for R. Yohanan ben Zakkai to understand the meaning of Cant 1:8, encapsulated in *Mekhilta*'s citation of Deut 28:47–48: "*Because you did not serve the LORD your God . . . therefore you shall serve your enemies . . .*" Thus the Jewish girl, as representative of all Israel in exile and under foreign domination, is the Song's *fairest among women*, now constrained to "*follow in the tracks of the* (*Arab*) *flock*" because she would not willingly serve God with love.[38]

With Israel encamped before Mt. Sinai, the Lord commissions Moses to remind His people *how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you unto Myself* (Exod 19:4). According to R. Akiva in *BaHodesh* 2 (Laut. II:202), God bringing Israel "*unto Myself*" refers to Him drawing them to both Mount Sinai and the Temple.[39] Here also, Israel is identified with the Canticle's bride, called *my dove, my perfect one* (Cant 6:9; II:205). In *BaHodesh* 3 (II:217), God's appearance on Sinai *on the third day*, with thundering and lightnings, a thick cloud, and the loud sound of trumpet (Exod 19:16), is said to be "confirmed" by Cant 1:12: "*While the king sat at his table, my nard gave forth its fragrance*". Though the connection is not explained, one may assume that the "king sitting at his table" is God about to form the covenant with Israel, and the "*fragrance*" presumably

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adds links between Exod 15:11, the "white and ruddy" beloved of Cant 5:10–16, and the "companions" of Cant 8:13.

38 Cf. also the treatment of this story in *Sifre Deut* 305 and other sources below, p. 307 n. 48.

39 *Mekh de-RaShBY* (*BaHodesh* 49:2; Nelson 216; Ep./Mel. 138) attributes the interpretation of "*how I bore you on eagle's wings*" (= the day of revelation at Sinai) and "*I brought you to me*" (= into the Temple) to Rabbi Eliezer. *Mekh de-RaShBY* also associates the divine providence over Israel, symbolized by the "eagles' wings," with Ezekiel's story of God taking care of the destitute maiden and "spreading His wing" over her (Ezek 16:8).

refers to the sights and sounds of the theophany.[40] The Midrash then presents the moment when Moses *brought the people out of the camp to meet God, and they stood at the foot of the mountain* (Exod 19:17) as *the* great nuptial moment between God and Israel. According to R. Yossi (Laut. II:218–20):

> Judah used to expound: *The Lord came from Sinai* (Deut 33:2). Do not read it thus, but read: "The Lord came to Sinai" to give the Torah to Israel. I, however, do not interpret it thus, but: *The Lord came from Sinai* to receive Israel as a bridegroom comes forth to meet the bride (לקבל את ישראל כחתן זה שהוא יוצא לקראת כלה).

This interpretation in effect puts Moses, who brings the bride Israel to her bridegroom YHWH, in the position of the *shoshbin* responsible for arranging the wedding. The view of Sinai as nuptial moment is reinforced by a renewed mention of the *dove in the clefts of the rock* (Cant 2:14), now taken to mean Israel coming near and standing *under the mountain* (תַּחַת הָהָר) (Deut 4:11).[41] The bride's lovely "*face*" now represents the twelve pillars erected for the twelve tribes of Israel, and her sweet "*voice*" is the people's response to the Ten Commandments.[42]

6.2.1.4 Summary: The *Mekhilta*

The treatment of the Exodus narrative in the *Mekhilta* reveals that the Tannaitic rabbis understood the time of the Exodus to be the moment when YHWH formed a lasting nuptial alliance with His people, following the views of the prophets Hosea, Jeremiah and Ezekiel. In contrast to the prophets, however, *Mekhilta* places a particular emphasis on the three central events of the

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40 This is the view adopted by *CantR* 1:12; cf. below p. 331 n. 100.

41 Cf. *b. Shabbat* 88a; *b. Qiddushin* 40b; *b. Baba Qama* 17a.

42 The previous view of Cant 2:14 as referring to Israel at the Red Sea is also recalled here by R. Eliezer: the bride's "*face*" is Israel beholding the salvific works of God, and her "*voice*" is the voice of the people crying out to the Lord (or singing the Song of the Sea). Cf. *Mekh de-RaShBY BaHodesh* 50:2. Discussing the Ten Commandments, *Mekhilta* follows the view of the prophets (quoting Ezek 16:32 and Hos 3:1), holding that "if one worships idols it is accounted to him as though he committed adultery, breaking his covenant with God" (*BaHodesh* 8, Laut. II:262–63). The two tablets of stone are compared to the Shulamite's breasts (Cant 4:5), and God's writing upon the tablets is illustrated as the beloved's hands *as rods of gold set with beryl* (Cant 5:14) (II:264). Another anthropomorphic association of God with the Canticle's lover follows (*BaHodesh* 9, Laut. II:270): not only ministering angels assisted Israel at Sinai, "but the Holy One, blessed be He, Himself also, as it is said: *His left hand is under my head and His right hand embraces me* (Cant 2:6)".

Exodus: the Passover, the crossing of the Red Sea, and the revelation at Sinai. The nuptial dimension of these events is highlighted by means of numerous verses from the Song of Songs, creating a sharp anthropomorphic image of God in His relation with Israel. Can the moments of the Exodus be attributed to specific stages in their relationship (courtship, betrothal, engagement period, marriage)? The Passover certainly appears to be the initial stage of the romance (courtship or betrothal?) given its association with the earliest stages of Ezekiel's "*time of love*" (Ezek 16:6). At the Red Sea, the passion between God and Israel seems to be growing stronger (e.g. Israel's willingness to die for her beloved), but the Lord's youthful appearance, Israel's immature love and lack of confidence in His salvation when cornered between the Egyptians and the sea, and the absence of specific marital covenant language would seem to indicate that this is the time between betrothal and marriage. By contrast, Sinai appears as the goal of the romance and moment of the wedding when the bridegroom comes to meet His bride. Significant is also the way in which the nuptial events of the Exodus are projected into the future. With the Canticle operating as link between the stations of Israel's history, the marriage prepared at the Passover and at the Sea, and sealed at Sinai, continues to be actualized via the enduring presence of the *Shekhinah* in the Tabernacle and Temple, and with the guarantee of its faithful indwelling in Israel until the Messianic redemption.

6.2.2 Sifre Devarim

Sifre Devarim is a Tannaitic exegetical midrash edited and compiled sometime in the third century in the Land of Israel on halakhic and narrative sections of the book of Deuteronomy, including the historical prologue (1:1–30), the prayer of Moses (3:23–4:1), the *Shema* (6:4–9), the book's legal core (11:10–26:15), the transfer of office to Joshua (31:14), the Song of Moses, his final blessing, and his death (32:1–34:12).[43] The narrative context is thus set some forty years after the initial events of the Exodus. Moses is now explaining the Law to the sons of Israel on the plains of Moab, on the eve of their entrance into the Promised Land. *Sifre*'s treatment of nuptial symbolism is accordingly not as sharply focused on the early events of the Exodus. On the other hand, it develops the nuptial meaning of the Torah as Wisdom, the motif of the Temple as place of marital encounter between God and Israel, the realization of this union in the nation's history, and its eschatological consummation in the Messianic age.

43 For an introduction on *Sifre Deut*, including its origin, textual history and dating, cf. Strack/Stemberger, *Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash*, 294–99; Hammer, *Sifre*, 1–21. The text followed here will be the Finkelstein critical edition, followed by Hammer's translation.

A first distinguishing feature found in *Sifre* is the cosmic role of the Temple and divine Presence. For example, Moses states in Deut 1:10 that the Israelites were *as the stars of heaven in multitude*; the Sages (Piska 10, Ham. 34–35, Fink. 18) relate these "stars" to seven groups of righteous in (presumably eschatological) Paradise (גן עדן), dwelling in increasing levels of divine intimacy expressed in Temple images: they are in God's "presence" (פניך), "courts" (חצריך), "house" (ביתך), "tents" (אהליך), "holy mountain" (הר קדשך), "mountain of the Lord" (הר ה׳), and "holy place" (מקום קדשו).[44] The Midrash further highlights the interrelated cosmic and Temple symbolism of the eschatological state of the righteous: According to R. Shimon bar Yochai, the faces of those who love God, when they meet the *Shekhinah* in the future, will resemble seven joyous things: the sun, the moon, the firmament, the stars, lightning, lilies, and the lampstand of the Temple. Nuptial allusions are added: the righteous will be "*fair as the moon*" like the Shulamite in Canticle 6:10, and will resemble the lilies (שׁוֹשַׁנִּים) of the nuptial Psalm 45:1.[45]

In a few places, Israel's observance of the Torah and commandments is either given a nuptial meaning, or it is related to protology and the origins of mankind, the Temple service, or the eschatological days.[46] In Piska 48 (Ham. 100–103, Fink. 110–11), the Midrash equates keeping the commandments (Deut 11:22) with *seeking wisdom as silver* (Prov 2:4). Connections between Torah, Wisdom, divine love, water, wine, and honey are creatively developed through correlations with several biblical verses – especially from Wisdom literature. Torah is the source of *cold waters to a faint soul* (Prov 25:25), forever free to anyone who wishes to restore his soul, as foretold by Isaiah (55:1). Just as water is priceless, "so are words of Torah priceless, as it is said, *She* (wisdom) *is more precious than rubies*" (Prov 3:15). The words of Torah, identified with divine Wisdom, are at the same time equated with the love of God, which makes the heart rejoice just as wine makes the heart rejoice: *For thy love is better than wine* (Cant 1:2,

44 On more connections between Lebanon, God's holy mountain and the Temple, cf. Piska 28.

45 Cf. also Piska 47 on Deut 11:19, which associates Cant 6:10 with the days of the Messiah, the world to come, and the resurrection of the dead (Hammer 98); Cf. *LevR* 30:2.

46 In Piska 36 (Ham. 69, Fink. 67–68), commenting on the *Shema* (Deut 6:9), the commandments adorning Israel are compared to jewelry adorning the wife of a king, and to the beauty of the Shulamite (Cant 6:4). In Piska 41 (Ham. 84–85, Fink. 86–87), the exhortation to obey God's commandments and *to love the LORD* (Deut 11:13) is tied to Cant 7:5, and the obligation to serve the Lord (לְעָבְדוֹ) and to keep (לשמור) the commandments is related to Adam's calling to "*work*" (לְעָבְדָהּ) and to "*guard*" (לְשָׁמְרָהּ) the Garden of Eden (Gen 2:15). To "serve" God is also related to study, to the Temple service and to prayer, which is as incense, *the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice*. (Ps 141:2)

cf. Ps 19:9). Moreover, the Torah is good for both the head and the body, as the ointment of the Song's lover is good for head and body: *your ointments have a goodly fragrance* (Cant 1:3), and *sweeter also than the honey and the honeycomb* (Ps 19:11). Yet the ultimate reason for keeping the commandments should be "*to love the Lord your God*" (Deut 11:22) for its own sake. This will bring benefits in both this world and the world to come, since Torah/Wisdom is *a tree of life to those who lay hold of her* (Prov 3:18, cf. 4:22) which *will place on your head a garland of grace* (in this world), and *a crown of glory she will bestow on you* (in the world to come) (Prov 4:9).[47]

The nuptial motif returns in Piska 305 (Ham. 295, Fink. 325) with a variation on the story of R. Yohanan ben Zakkai and the girl gathering barley grains from under the feet of Arab cattle as a commentary on Cant 1:8.[48] The story here is more elaborate, with R. Yohanan directly engaging in conversation with the girl. She asks the sage: "you no doubt remember when you signed my marriage contract" (חתמת בכתובתי). The nuptial symbolism of the story is seen not only in the quotation of Cant 1:8 and the girl's role as representative of Israel, but also in her *ketubah*, likely symbolizing Israel's covenant with God embodied in the Torah.[49]

Sifre's commentary on the *ha'azinu* (Deut 32:1f) is also given a nuptial/eschatological meaning (Piska 306, Ham. 298–99, Fink. 329–30). The Song of Moses becomes the occasion for a dramatic dialogue between God and Israel: as Israel humbly recalls her former faults, God reminds her of the eschatological hope of Isaiah's *new heavens and new earth* (Isa 65:17) when all these failings will be forgotten, including the *Ba'alim* that she used to love in the time of Hosea (Hos 2:19).[50] With the definitive disappearance of the former illegitimate

47 The piska concludes with an identification of the Torah with cosmic "Temple vessels": Just as Belshazzar was uprooted because he misused the Temple vessels, so the one who misuses the vessel with which the world was created, the Torah, will be uprooted from this world and the world to come (Ham. 105, Fink. 114).

48 "If you do not know, O fairest among women, follow in the footsteps of the flock, and feed your little goats beside the shepherds' tents." Cf. above, p. 303. For variations on this story cf. ARN-A 17, *t. Ketuboth* 5:9–10, *y. Ketuboth* 85, *b. Ketuboth* 66b–67a.

49 Moreover, the mention that the girl's formerly wealthy family used to worship in the Temple with great honors indicates that Israel's Temple worship is the expression of the people's nuptial covenant with God.

50 *Sifre* also tackles here the problem raised by Jeremiah (3:1) on the deuteronomic law prohibiting that a divorced wife return to her former husband (cf. Deut 24:1–4). The Midrash solves the difficulty of God taking again Israel as wife by explaining that a prohibition given to *man* is not binding on God (cf. Hos 11:9), who never really divorced His wife anyway, as Isaiah (50:1) explained.

"husbands" (*ba'alim*), God's promise to betroth Israel to Himself forever (Hos 2:21) will surely come to pass.[51]

Nuptial imagery most clearly appears as a dynamic reality moving through salvation history in Piska 343 (Ham. 354–55, Fink. 398–99). The context is Moses blessing the children of Israel before his death, and the verse discussed is Deut 33:2, recalling the giving of the Law at Sinai:

> *And* [*Moses*] *said: "The LORD came from Sinai, and dawned on them from Seir; He shone forth from Mount Paran, and He came with ten thousands of saints* (or: *from myriads holy*, מֵרִבְבֹת קֹדֶשׁ); *from His right hand came a fiery law for them."*

The Midrash reads into the verse a telescopic view of history, identifying four occasions when God "shines forth": the first was in Egypt (cf. Ps 80:2); the second, at the time of the giving of the Torah (Deut 33:2); the third will be at the time of Gog and Magog (cf. Ps 94:1), and the fourth in the days of the Messiah (Ps 50:2). The "*myriads holy*" are associated with the angels that were present when God revealed Himself at the Red Sea (cf. Exod 15:2), and the Midrash adds a variation on the dialogue between the nations and Israel based on Cant 5:9–16, as seen in the Mekhilta.[52]

In summary, *Sifre*, like the *Mekhilta*, views the covenant between God and Israel as a nuptial covenant projected into Israel's future history, often expressed through verses from the Song of Songs. *Sifre*'s nuptial imagery is more modest than the *Mekhilta's*, showing less interest in the Passover, Red Sea, and Sinai theophany. Yet it makes interesting contributions in its treatment of the nuptial role of the Torah as wisdom and *ketubah*, the Temple as place of nuptial

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51 Similar eschatological nuptial symbolism is found elsewhere: In Piska 313, the remembrance that God found His people in a desert land (Deut 32:10) is related to God's calling of Abraham, to the giving of the Ten Commandments at Sinai, and to the future nuptial covenant spoken of by Hosea 2:16. In Piska 314, God's tender care of Israel (Deut 32:11) points to Israel's eschatological redemption by the salvific action of God, personified as the beloved of Cant 2:8 who will accomplish Isaiah's oracles (43:6, 49:22) announcing the nation's return from exile.

52 Here too the nations ask Israel "*What is thy beloved more than another beloved* (Cant 5:9), that you are prepared to die for His sake, as it is said, *Therefore they love thee unto death*" (Cant 1:3) – using the same word play between עלמות and על מות to describe Israel's willingness to be martyred; she responds with the depiction of God as the Canticle's lover in Cant 5:10–16, in a continuing dialogue with the nations based on Cant 6:1, 3. Cf. *Mekh Shirata* 1, 3.

union, and the relation of these institutions of Israel to the Garden of Eden and Tree of Life, and to the eschatological Messianic redemption.

6.3 Amoraitic Midrashim

The allegorical exegesis of the Song of Songs dramatically expands in scope in the Amoraic period. If the Tannaitic halakhic midrashim are primarily concerned with the Exodus narrative, the wider setting of the Amoraitic exegetical and homiletical midrashim (commenting on a broader selection of books of Scripture) reveals a nuptial symbolism associated with all periods of Israel's history – past, present, and future, moving from creation to the eschaton. We will examine three of these texts: *Genesis Rabbah, Leviticus Rabbah*, and *Pesikta de-Rav Kahana*.[53]

6.3.1 Genesis Rabbah

Dated around 400 CE, *Genesis Rabbah* is one of the oldest aggadic exegetical midrashim.[54] As a midrash on the first book of the Bible, it contains many motifs touching upon cosmology and protology, how the universe came to be, the origins of mankind, and how the later religious institutions of Israel were foreshadowed at creation and the dawn of human history.[55] The origin of these institutions is brought in evidence from the first pages of the Midrash. According to *GenR* 1:4 (Neusner 1:10, Th./Alb. 1:6), six things preceded the creation of the world. Two were created before the world – the Torah (identified with divine Wisdom, cf. Prov 8:22), and the throne of glory (cf. Ps 93:2), while the other four were already "thought of," existing conceptually in the divine mind: the patriarchs, Israel, the Temple, and the name of the Messiah. This is a sketch of salvation history in a nutshell, forming the framework in which the Midrash will develop its nuptial symbolism (as we will see below): from the moment of creation the Torah existed, waiting, as it were, for the moment of its future revelation on Sinai while Israel was being formed and prepared through the life of the patriarchs. The idea of the Temple was also pre-existent,

53 Nuptial symbolism and the allegorical exegesis of the Canticle are also found in other works such as Avot de-Rabbi Nathan, Lamentations Rabbah, and the two Talmuds.

54 Cf. Strack/Stemberger, 300–308. I will follow the Theodor/Albeck critical edition of *GenR* and Neusner's English translation based on the same text.

55 In the brief study of *GenR* presented here, I will limit myself to the Midrash's treatment of the origins of the world and of mankind as narrated in Gen 1–3, and will not be concerned with the rest of Genesis.

waiting for its own "moment" when it would be built. Even the eschaton was planned from the beginning through the name of the Messiah, who would one day usher in the final redemption and grant Israel access to the divine throne of glory.

The historical framework for the Midrash's nuptial symbolism is further displayed in the historical-cosmic role attributed to the Temple: *GenR* 2:5 (Neusner 1:26, Th./Alb. 1:18) tells us that according to R. Hiyya Rabbah, at the beginning of creation God foresaw that the Temple would be built, destroyed and rebuilt: "*in the beginning God created*" refers to the building of the Temple (cf. Isa 51:16); "*and the earth was unformed*" refers to its destruction (cf. Jer 4:23); and "*let there be light*" refers to its reconstruction in the world to come (Isa 60:1). In *GenR* 3:4 (Neusner 1:29, Th./Alb. 1:20), R. Berekiah holds that the primeval light called into existence by God's word at creation was in fact "created from the place of the Temple," as well as identified with the glory of God that came from the east and entered Ezekiel's Temple when *the earth shone with His glory* (Ezek 43:2).[56] In *GenR* 3:9 (Neusner 1:35, Th./Alb. 1:24), the creation of the world is identified with the raising of the Tabernacle in the wilderness, with God declaring: "It is as if on that day [of the raising of the Tabernacle], I actually created the world." These correlations between God's work of creation and the future Tabernacle/Temple imply that, as in Sirach, the world is understood to be a macro-temple and the sanctuary a microcosm.[57]

It is within this cosmic macro-temple that God creates humanity and "institutes marriage," so to speak. *GenR* 8:1 (Neusner 1:73, Th./Alb. 1:55) recalls the old idea that the first human was androgynous before its separation into man and woman: According to R. Samuel b. Nahman, God "created him with two faces, then sawed him into two and made a back on one side, and a back on the other." There is a hint at the idea that Adam is an anthropic Temple when his "side" (צלע) is associated with the "side" (צלע) of the Tabernacle (Exod 26:20).

56 The glory of the Temple present at creation is also identified with Jeremiah's "*glorious high throne from the beginning*," which is "*the place of our sanctuary*" (Jer 17:12).

57 The role of the world as macro-Temple is also illustrated in *GenR* 4:1 (Neusner 1:37, Th./Alb. 1:25), where the *firmament in the midst of the waters* (Gen 1:6) is described as the roof of God's palace by means of a reference to Ps 104:3 ("*He lays the beams of His upper chambers in the waters*"). The Midrash makes constant efforts to correlate the story of creation with the history of Israel. *GenR* 5:5 is another example, where the dividing of the waters of creation (Gen 1:9) is associated with the dividing of the waters of the Red Sea. As Neusner notes: "the main point is that Israel will be saved by God's intervention into its history, just as the world was brought into existence through God's act of creating the world" (Neusner 1:49, Th./Alb. 1:35).

The nuptial theme appears in *GenR* 8:13 (Neusner 1:86, Th./Alb. 1:67), where God plays an active part in the union of Adam and Eve. R. Abbahu said: "The Holy One, blessed be He, took a cup of blessing and blessed them." R. Simlai adds: "we find that the Holy One, blessed be He, blesses bridegrooms and adorns brides." In playing the dual role of blessing the first couple (Gen 1:28) and building Adam's rib into Eve, God is in fact playing the mediating role of Adam and Eve's *Shoshbin* who plans and arranges their marriage.

A nuptial meaning is also given to the work of creation which God declares to be *very good* (Gen 1:31). In *GenR* 9:4, R. Jonathan compares the Creator of the world to a king who married off his daughter and prepared her a marriage-canopy (חופה) and house:

> He saw it and it pleased him. He said, 'O my daughter, my daughter, may this marriage canopy always charm me as it chams me at this hour.' So said the Holy One, blessed be he, to his world, 'O my world, my world! May you always charm me as you charm me at this hour.' (Neusner 1:92, Th./Alb. 1:69)

The symbolism of this midrash is somewhat ambiguous: the king is obviously a figure of God, and His daughter who charms Him and whom he addresses is the world – presumably mankind. Yet the *hupah* and house made for the daughter also represent the world, here possibly the physical and material creation that serves as home for mankind. Thus the creation of the world here is nothing less than the marriage of God's daughter (mankind) under the *hupah* of creation. But the construction of this midrash with God as Father of the bride leaves no place for the bridegroom. This absence is remedied in other passages.

A similar parable is found in *GenR* 10:9 (Neusner 1:107, Th./Alb. 1:85). Genibah compares the completion of God's work of creation on the seventh day (Gen 2:2) to a king who also made a *hupah* – but in this case for himself. The only thing lacking was a bride to come into it. "So too what did the world lack? It was the Sabbath." Thus if in R. Jonathan's parable the marriage is primarily earthly and the bride is the world/mankind (with the bridegroom remaining anonymous), Genibah describes an exclusively heavenly marriage between God and the Sabbath under the *hupah* of creation.[58] But there is more: *GenR* 11:8 (Neusner 1:117, Th./Alb. 1:95–96) presents a third type of marriage

58 The Sabbath was also the source of light for all creation and particularly for man, but it was lost because of Adam's sin. Still, even though the lights were dimmed on the eve of the Sabbath, the light tarried on throughout the Sabbath: "The glory stayed the night, but

where heaven and earth are joined together. In a saying attributed to R. Shimon bar Yochai, the Sabbath complains to the Holy One at the moment of creation that it has no mate (in contrast to the first six days who are paired up with one another). God replies that the community of Israel is to be her mate:

> When Israel stood before Mount Sinai, the Holy One blessed be He, said to them, 'Remember what I said to the Sabbath: 'The community of Israel is your mate.'' Now therefore: *remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy*. (cf. Exod 20:8)

The meaning of the passage is elucidated in the double meaning of "keep it holy" (לְקַדְּשׁוֹ) which R. Shimon understands as "consecrate in marriage." The marriage here is between the Sabbath and Israel, and it was already announced at the time of creation. This nuptial covenant was not actually *instituted* at Mount Sinai (with the giving of the Ten Commandments, including the one prescribing the sanctification of the Sabbath), but merely *recalled* as something that had been sealed since the beginning of creation. The obligation to keep the Sabbath, given to Israel at Sinai, rests upon the original betrothal made at the dawn of history.[59]

Some ideas of interest also emerge from the expositions of the Eden narrative. In *GenR* 15:1 (Neusner 1:161–62, Th./Alb. 1:135–36), God's planting of the Garden (Gen 2:8) is matched with Ps 104:16: "*The trees of the LORD have their fill, the cedars of Lebanon which He planted*." According to the Midrash, the cedars of Lebanon were transplanted into the Garden of Eden. R. Yohanan states that they were created for the sake of the construction of the Temple, while R. Samuel b. Nachman recalls that cedar will be one of the trees planted in the wilderness in the age to come, as foretold in Isaiah 41:19.[60] Further connections are made between Eden and the Temple in *GenR* 16:2 (Neusner 1:170, Th./Alb. 1:143): According to R. Shimon b. Laqish, the gold of Eden's neighboring land of Havilah existed for the sake of the Temple.[61]

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at the end of the Sabbath, [God] took the splendor from him and drove him out of the Garden of Eden" (*GenR* 11:5, Neusner 1:110, Th./Alb. 1:88).

59 And so Kimelman ("Rabbi Yohanan and Origen on the Song of Songs," 570): "Thus, the Sabbath is *Sponsa Israelis, in potentia*, from creation, although the consummation of the bridal union is delayed until the word of God becomes "incarnate" at Sinai."

60 Eden is a place of feasting: God placing Adam in the Garden is compared to a king who made a banquet and invited guests (*GenR* 15:4, Neusner 1:164, Th./Alb. 1:137).

61 Another interpretation sees the gold of Havilah as the words of Torah (*GenR* 16:4, Neusner 1:173, Th./Alb. 1:147).

GenR 16:5 (Neusner 1:175–76, Th./Alb. 1:149) also links creation with Sinai and Israel's worship through the observance of the Sabbath and the offering of sacrifices: R. Berekiah identifies God's placing (וַיַּנִּחֵהוּ) of Adam in the Garden of Eden to "till it and keep it" (Gen 2:15) with the religious duty of resting (נח) on the Sabbath, and the commandment to "work" (לְעָבְדָהּ) and "keep" (לְשָׁמְרָהּ) the Garden with the permission to "work" for six days and the obligation to "keep" the Sabbath. In another interpretation, לְעָבְדָהּ וּלְשָׁמְרָהּ is associated with the offerings in the Temple and requirement to serve (תַּעַבְדוּן) God on Sinai (Exod 3:21), keeping (תִּשְׁמְרוּ) the obligation of offering Him sacrifices. Moreover, the Eden narrative is given a nuptial meaning in *GenR* 18:1 (Neusner 1:189–90, Th./Alb. 1:161) when, commenting on the moment when God made the woman out of the man's rib and brought her to him (Gen 2:22), R. Shimon bar Yochai portrays God as a divine matchmaker who "adorned her like a bride and brought her to him."

The drama of Adam and Eve's sin and their banishment from Eden is also depicted using nuptial imagery in *GenR* 20:7 (Neusner 1:221, Th./Alb. 1:190–91). The woman's desire (תְּשׁוּקָה) for her husband as a result of the fall (Gen 3:16) is likened to God's desire for Israel, expressed by Cant 7:10 (וְעָלַי תְּשׁוּקָתוֹ). In *GenR* 21:8, Adam and Eve's casting out (גרש) is portrayed as a divorce (the same word is used for both expressions),[62] and compared to the destruction of the Temple.[63] The exile from Eden is thus understood as a break in the original marriage between God and humanity (represented by Adam and Eve), just as the Temple's destruction signifies a rupture in the nuptial relationship between God and Israel.

In summary, we find in *Genesis Rabbah* several motifs attributing a nuptial meaning to the dawn of creation and humanity – from the portrayal of God creating the world as a king marrying off his daughter under the *hupah*, to the cosmic and mystical *hieros gamos* between the Creator-king and Sabbath-bride, to the mating between *Knesset Israel* and the Sabbath at creation. This nuptial meaning is related to the Torah, the Tabernacle and Temple, the throne

62 The rabbis dispute the severity of the banishment and discuss – in nuptial terms – whether a return will ever be possible: According to R. Yohanan, the situation is compared to the case of a priest's daughter who was divorced and can no longer return to her husband (who, as a priest, is forbidden to marry a divorcee). R. Simeon b. Laqish takes a more lenient view and argues that the exiled Adam has the status of an Israelite's daughter who can return to the Israelite who divorced her.

63 The comparison is made by means of a play on words between יגרש and יגרס: "*He drove out* (ויגרש) *the man* (Gen 3:24). [The verb for *drove out* may be read as] *he showed him* (ויגרס) [that is to say] he showed him the destruction of the Temple: *And He broke my teeth with gravel* (Lam 3:16)." (Neusner 1:236, Th./Alb. 1:202–203).

of glory, and the Messianic age by means of creative literary devices such as links between creation and the Sinai revelation as nuptial events, or Adam and Eve's expulsion from Eden as a divorce between God and humanity that foreshadowed the future destruction of the Temple.

6.3.2 Leviticus Rabbah

Leviticus Rabbah is a homiletical midrash that was probably redacted sometime during the fifth century, consisting of 37 homilies on Leviticus.[64] Accordingly, its main context is Israel in the desert at the time of the Exodus, and its chief interests are the laws concerning sacrifices and offerings, the priesthood, legal purity, and laws of holiness. *LevR* makes considerable use of the nuptial motif on this legal material,[65] and like *GenR*, it is interested in connecting Israel's religious institutions with the origins of mankind and with salvation history.

Commenting on Lev 1:2 ("*When any man* (אדם) *of you brings an offering to the LORD . . .*"), *LevR* 2:7–8 (Isr./Sl. 25–27, Marg. 46–47) ties in Israel's offering of sacrifices with the first man Adam, with Israel's exile, expressed as a marriage/divorce parable, and with the heavenly revelation of divine glory. Lev 1:2 uses the term "man" (אדם) to denote anyone in Israel who brings a sacrifice to the Lord. But according to R. Berekiah, אדם literally refers to Adam, because God said to Israel: "Let your offering be like the offering of [the first] Adam." In another interpretation, אדם is an expression of love, of brotherliness, and of friendship, and it is connected with the term "*son of man*" of the book of Ezekiel. This leads into a discussion of Israel's exile and of how the national calamity did not negatively affect God's glory. The case is illustrated by a king whose wife and children rebelled against him, and he banished them from his house. After a while, the king invited back a son and showed him his house and royal court (ביתי ובית שכינתי), and how his glory and court (כבודי ושכינתי) were not diminished after the mother's banishment. The king's כבוד is described as the vision of divine glory seen by Ezekiel in the awesome *merkavah* – where myriads of ministering angels continuously sanctify his name, and which reappears in the prophet's eschatological Temple (Ezek 1:1, 3, 4; 43:1–11).

The points made in this passage are the following: First, Israel's offerings are modeled upon the original offering of Adam. Second, Israel's sacrificial worship

64 For an introduction on *LevR*, cf. Strack/Stemberger 313–17.

65 This begins with the first verse (*LevR* 1:10 on Lev 1:1), where we find a familiar interpretation of Cant 3:4: *my mother's house* represents Sinai (where Israel was adopted and first reared) and the *chamber of her that conceived me* (הורתי) is the Tent of Meeting where they were formally given the "teaching" (הוראתי), i.e. the Torah. Isr./Sl. 13–14, Marg. 24–25. Cf. *Mekh de-RaShBY Shirata* 29:1 (above, p. 302 n. 36); *CantR* 2:3 §4.

to YHWH is portrayed as the expression of a marital relationship between wife and husband. Third, Israel's offences against the sacrificial system are equated with the rebellion of the wife and children against the husband, with banishment/exile as the consequence. Fourth, the glory of the king is God's own glory and *Shekhinah* as manifested in Ezekiel's *merkavah*. Fifth, God's glory was not diminished after He cast out his wife Israel out of His "house," the Temple and Land of Israel.

Following several other passages associating the sacrifices with love,[66] *LevR* 9:6 (Isr./Sl. 112–14, Marg. 183–85) discusses the law of peace-offerings (Lev 7:11f), drawing a number of additional connections between sacrificial worship, nuptiality, and eschatological redemption by means of a quote from Cant 4:16: "עוּרִי צָפוֹן וּבוֹאִי תֵימָן הָפִיחִי גַּנִּי יִזְלוּ בְשָׂמָיו". Here, the north and south winds refer respectively to the burnt-offering slaughtered on the north side of the altar, and the thanksgiving offering slaughtered on the south side.[67] The north and south winds are also associated with the future return of the exiled communities from the north and south (via connections to Jer 31:8 and Isa 43:6), the coming of Gog from the north and his fall in the south (Ezek 39:2), and the coming of the Messianic King from the north who will rebuild the sanctuary in the south (Isa 41:25). The nuptial meaning of all this – the Temple sacrifices, the return from exile, and the Messianic Sanctuary – is then highlighted with the rest of Cant 4:16, in a saying attributed to R. Yohanan:

> The Torah teaches you good breeding, namely, that a bridegroom should not enter the bridal chamber (חֻפָּה) unless the bride gives him permission. This is [indicated by] what is written: *Let my beloved come into his*

66 In *LevR* 2:11 (Isr./Sl. 31, Marg. 51–52), the bullock offered as a burnt offering on the north side (צפֹנָה) of the altar (Lev 1:5, 11) is identified with the "*new and old*" gifts that the Shulamite laid up (צָפַנְתִּי) for her lover in Cant 7:13. In discussing the grain offerings upon which oil and frankincense are poured (Lev 2:1–2), *LevR* 3:7 (Isr./Sl. 44, Marg. 72–73) identifies the oil with both the Torah and the name of the Song's beloved (cf. Cant 1:3). The Song's "maidens" (עֲלָמוֹת) are the nations who, if they would accept the Torah, would also come to love God with a perfect love. As for the Jewish Torah scholars, even if they are to be killed, they abide in bliss forever: *unto death* (על מות) *do they love thee* (Cf. above, p. 301). *LevR* 6:5 (Isr./Sl. 83, Marg. 137–39) interprets the Sinai covenant as a nuptial alliance, identifying the moment when Israel stood at the Mount while Moses sealed the covenant (cf. Exod 24:6) with the "*time of love*" of Ezekiel 16:8 (cf. *Mekh Pisḥa* 5 above, p. 298). In *LevR* 8:1, it is said that since creation God has been involved with matchmaking couples – a task as hard as the dividing of the Red Sea (Isr./Sl. 100, Marg. 164–65).

67 Cf. the same use of Cant 4:16 in *GenR* 22:5 and 34:9; *CantR* 4:16 (Simon 226).

> *garden* (לְגַנּוֹ)*, and enjoy his precious fruits*, followed by [the lover saying]: *I am come into my garden, my sister, my bride*. (Cant 4:16f)

The point is that after the Jews return from exile, the divine Bridegroom will wait for their invitation to come into His "garden" (גַּנּוֹ), that is, the Temple (interpreted as גִּנּוּנוֹ, "his bridal chamber"), where He will enjoy the scent of his "precious fruits," the burnt sacrifices.[68] This is followed by a prediction that in the age to come all sacrifices and prayers will be abolished except for the Thanksgiving offering (תּוֹדָה) and prayer (הוֹדָאָה). According to the Midrash, these were spoken of by Jeremiah 33:11 when he prophesied that there shall be heard again "*the voice of the bridegroom and voice of the bride*," *the voice of those who say "give thanks* (הוֹדוּ) *to the Lord of Hosts,"* and "*those who will bring the sacrifice of praise* (תּוֹדָה) *into the house of the LORD"* when the captives will return to the cities of Judah.[69] Thus *LevR* 9:6–7 connects the peace and thanksgiving offerings sacrificed in the desert Tabernacle (the *p'shat* of Lev 7:11–12), the Lord as Bridegroom entering into His eschatological, messianic Temple/garden/bridal chamber, and the eschatological worship of thanksgiving that will be offered to Him at the end of the ages.

Lev 9:1f discusses the consecration of Aaron and his sons. *LevR* 11:1–4 (Isr./Sl. 135–38, Marg. 219–23) expounds the first verse of this chapter by means of a commentary on the feast of Lady Wisdom in Prov 9:1–4. There, as we recall, she had *built her house, hewn out her seven pillars, slaughtered her meat, mingled her wine, furnished her table* and *sent forth her maidens* to invite young men to join her at her banquet with the seductive invitation: "Come, eat of my bread and drink of the wine I have mixed. (Prov 9:5).[70] The Sages interpret Lady Wisdom's invitation to her banquet – with, presumably, all of its erotic innuendo – as simultaneously referring to the creation of the world (*LevR* 11:1), the eschatological war with Gog (11:2), the Torah (11:3), and the Tent of Meeting (11:4). This multi-layered interpretation of Lady Wisdom's feast spanning across all of salvation history at our four "key moments" is best seen in tabular form:

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68 On the same play on words between גַּנּוֹ and גִּנּוּנוֹ, cf. *PRK* 1:1 and *CantR* 5:1 §1 below, pp. 320 and 337.

69 *LevR* 9:7. The view is attributed to R. Phinehas, R. Levi and R. Johanan. Cf. also *LevR* 27:12 (Isr./Sl. 357).

70 See above, p. 25.

Wisdom (Prov 9)	**Creation (*LevR* 11:1) (R. Jeremiah b. Ilai)**	**Age to Come (11:2) (R. Jonah)**	**Torah (11:3) (Bar Kappara)**	**Tabernacle (11:4) (R. Abba b. Kahana)**
Built her house	Lord founded the earth (Prov 3:19)	Temple (Prov 24:3)	Pre-existent Torah giving wisdom (Prov 2:6, 8:22)	Bezalel filled w/ spirit of God (Exod 31:3)
Hewn out 7 pillars	7 days of creation (Gen 2:3, Exod 20:11)	Seven years of Gog (Ezek 39:9)	7 books of Torah[a]	7 days of consecration (Lev 8:33)
Slaughtered meat	Earth brings forth living creatures, cattle (Gen 1:24)	Eating flesh of the mighty (Ezek 39:18)	Penalties of the Law	Sacrifices
Mingled wine	Let waters be gathered together (Gen 1:9)	Drinking blood of princes (*ibid.*)	Expository methods of inferences: *kal vahomer* and *gezerah shawah*.	Drink-offerings
Furnished table	Let earth put forth grass (Gen 1:11)	Be filled at my table with horses and horsemen (ib. 20)	Laws of valuation (*arakhin*)	Loaves of shewbread
Sent forth maidens/ called servants	Calling Adam and Eve to feast (*GenR* 8:6)[b]	'Son of man . . . speak unto the birds of every wing' (ib. 17)	Calling Israel	Moses calling Aaron & sons & elders of Israel.
Wings of heights of the city	And you shall be as God (3:5)	–	Enabling Israel to fly, granting divine qualities (Ps 82:6)	–
Whoever is simple, let him turn in here!	Adam lacked understanding, Wisdom instructed him	–	Forsaking God/ Golden Calf	–

[a] The Midrash justifies this by explaining how Bar Kappara divided the book of Numbers into three books, thus arriving at seven books of the Torah.
[b] This alludes to *GenR* 8:6 where God is said to have first prepared man's food before calling him into the world.

The centrality of Mount Sinai as *the* nuptial moment between God and Israel returns in *LevR* 18:4 (Isr./Sl. 231, Marg. 408). In a saying attributed to R. Shimon bar Yohai, Cant 4:7 ("כֻּלָּךְ יָפָה רַעְיָתִי וּמוּם אֵין בָּךְ") refers to the moment when Israel stood at Sinai and expressed their pure obedience by saying "*All that the Lord has spoken we will do and obey*" (Exod 24:7).[71] Later, in *LevR* 20:10 (Isr./Sl. 261–62, Marg. 462–68) there is a discussion on the death of Aaron's sons Nadab and Abihu (Lev 16:1), recalling the moment when they went up on the mountain with Moses, Aaron and the seventy elders of Israel (Exod 24:1). According to R. Joshua and others, the fact that they *saw God, and they ate and drank* (Exod 24:11) should not be interpreted as though they brought provisions with them on Mt. Sinai, but rather that they inordinately fed their eyes upon the *Shekhinah* (זנו עיניהם מן השכינה). Even though they did not die at Sinai, it is there that they brought a death sentence upon themselves. R. Meir illustrates the matter with the parable of a king who celebrated the marriage of his daughter but found a fault in her best man (שושבין) that was deserving of death. In order not to mar his daughter's joy, the king preferred to postpone the man's slaying to his own joyous celebration, expected at a later date. In the same way, God decided not to slay Nadab and Abihu at His daughter's (the Torah's) wedding celebration (the Sinai theophany) but rather waited for His own celebration (the erection of the Tabernacle and taking up of the divine abode in Israel) – to kill them.[72] This interpretation of Sinai and of the establishment of the Tabernacle as two nuptial moments is confirmed with a connection to Cant 3:11, where, as in the Mishnah, the *day of* [*Solomon's*] *espousals* refers to Mount Sinai and the *day of the gladness of his heart* to the Tent of Meeting.[73]

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71 Cf. also *LevR* 19:6 (Isr./Sl. 249).

72 The Torah's nuptial role appears in a number of places in *LevR*, though its gender is not always clear. In *LevR* 19:1, the Torah appears to be masculine, identified with the golden head of the lover in Cant 5:11, but it is also identified with the (female) Wisdom of Prov 8:22 (Isr./Sl. 234, Marg. 412–13). The Torah is identified with Wisdom as the *tree of life* (Prov 3:18) in *LevR* 25:1, here taking on the role of bride as a treasure rejected by the nations and accepted by Israel (Isr./Sl. 313, Marg. 566–67). The relationship between the lover of Cant 5:15, the Torah, and creation returns in *LevR* 25:8 (Isr./Sl. 322, Marg. 583): the legs of the beloved *as pillars of marble* (Cant 5:15) represent the world which is 'as pillars of marble' (שש), based upon the six (שש) days of creation. The lover's legs *set upon sockets of fine gold* indicate that the world is set upon the words of the Torah, *more to be desired than gold* (Ps 19:11). Cf. *CantR* 5:11–16. On the Torah as bride, cf. קדרי, תמר. "'תוכו רצוף אהבה': על התורה כרעיה בדרשות תנאים לשיר השירים".

73 Cf. *m. Ta'anit* 4.8 and above, p. 295. Other nuptial allusions in *LevR* include: In *LevR* 23:1, faithful Israel in the midst of the idolatrous Egyptians is described as the "*lily*

In summary, *LevR*'s treatment of the legal material in Leviticus reveals much interest for nuptial matters. This symbolism is extended via verses from the Song throughout the history of Israel, from Adam/Eden to the Age to Come and the revelation of divine glory. Here too, Mount Sinai appears to be the central nuptial moment between God and Israel; the Tent of Meeting is the place where Sinai is confirmed and this love is acted out, and the nuptial drama is oriented towards its eschatological fulfillment. Particular to *LevR* is the equivalence of the Tabernacle with the bride's "garden" in the Canticle – taken as a metaphor for a bridal chamber – the extended treatment of sacrifices as expression of Israel's love for God, the midrash on the feast of Lady Wisdom (situated at creation, at the giving of the Torah, in the Tabernacle, and in the Age to Come), and the role of the Torah as bride.

6.3.3 Pesikta de-Rav Kahana

Pesikta de-Rav Kahana is a homiletic midrash on the readings for feasts and special Sabbaths, dated to the fifth century and approximately contemporaneous with *LevR*.[74] *PRK* makes an especially strong use nuptial symbolism in the following piskas, which we will consider below: piska 1 (on Num 7:1 for Hanukkah), piska 12 (on Exod 19:1 for Pentecost), and piskot 19, 20, 21, and 22 (on readings from Isaiah for the Sabbaths following the Ninth of Ab).[75]

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among thorns" (Cant 2:2) (Isr./Sl. 292, Marg. 526). In *LevR* 27:1, Israel asking God to save her is portrayed as the Shulamite pleading to her lover "*draw me, we will run after you*" (Cant 1:4), and the place where Israel is "drawn" is the Garden of Eden (נַחֵל עֲדָנֶיךָ) (Ps 36:9) (Isr./Sl. 343–44, Marg. 613–23). *LevR* **30:2** (on Lev 23:40) reveals cosmic/Temple/nuptial symbolism in the instructions calling the Israelites to rejoice for the celebration of Sukkot. The rejoicing represents the *fullness of joy* of the righteous, who will welcome the *Shekhinah* in the future and will be like the sun and moon, firmament, stars, lightnings, lilies, and candlestick of the Temple – also alluding to the Shulamite who is "*fair as the moon, clear as the sun*" (Cant 6:10) (Isr./Sl. 382, Marg. 691–93; Cf. *Sifre Deut* 10 and above, p. 306). *LevR* 34:15 promises that those who care for the poor will become *white and ruddy* (Cant 5:10) like God, and like a *spring of water* (Isa 58:11) – referring to the Garden of Eden and spring of living waters that will flow out of the Holy of Holies in the last days, as foretold by Zech 14:8 (Isr./Sl. 443, Marg. 809–12).

74 For introductions on *PRK*, cf. Strack/Stemberger 317–22; Braude/Kapstein ix–lvii.

75 Although Piska 5 is also rich in nuptial symbolism (esp. 5:6–9), I will skip it because much of its imagery is also found in the Midrash and Targum on the Song of Songs. The texts used will be Mandelbaum's critical edition (first volume) and the translation of Braude/Kapstein.

6.3.3.1 Piska 1

PRK opens with the lesson for the Sabbath during Hanukkah. As Jews commemorate in their liturgy the rededication of the Temple by the Maccabees, the Parashah discusses the original dedication of the desert Tabernacle, opening with Num 7:1: "On the day when Moses had finished setting up (וַיְהִי בְּיוֹם כַּלּוֹת מֹשֶׁה) the tabernacle, and had anointed and consecrated it . . ." The midrash immediately introduces the nuptial theme by quoting Cant 5:1 ("בָּאתִי לְגַנִּי אֲחֹתִי כַלָּה"), where the words of the lover to his beloved are taken to be the words of God speaking to Israel. R. Azariah explains the context by telling the parable of a king who became angry at his wife and deposed her, casting her out of his palace, but later wished to restore her back to her place. The queen asks him to first restore his former practice of receiving gifts from her. The meaning conveyed by the Midrash is that God (the king) who formerly withdrew from men (the wife), now desires to draw close to them again, but this is dependent upon Him receiving Israel's gifts of offerings and sacrifices. R. Tanhum, citing R. Simeon b. Yose, uses Cant 4:16–5:1 to illustrate that "a groom [God] is not to enter the bridal canopy [the Tabernacle] until his bride [Israel] gives him permission": first, she extends to him the invitation ("יָבֹא דוֹדִי לְגַנּוֹ") and only afterwards does he respond ("בָּאתִי לְגַנִּי"). With the Song's garden (גַּנִּי) identified with the divine bridal chamber (גִּנּוּנִי),[76] the midrash identifies the lover in his "garden" as the divine root of the *Shekhinah* on earth and in the Garden of Eden at the beginning of time. This is related to God's interaction with Adam and Eve, who heard the "voice" of the Lord "walking" in the Garden (Gen 3:8). *PRK* takes this as God walking *away* from Adam and Eve, from earth towards heaven. Thus the root of the *Shekhinah*, originally located on earth, progressively withdrew from earth back to heaven with every successive sinful generation.[77] Abraham initiated the reversal of this process, and the merits of later patriarchs and priests[78] contributed to the return of the *Shekhinah* on earth, ultimately accomplished through Moses' construction of the Tabernacle. This leads back to the opening verse (Num 7:1), now charged with a nuptial meaning through a pun on the "day of completion" (כלות) of the Tabernacle, rendered as Israel's "bridal day" (כלת). Hence *PRK* considers the day

76 Cf. *LevR* 9:6 above and *CantR* 5:1 below.

77 Following the sin of Adam, the sins of the generations of Enosh, of the flood, of Babel, of the Egyptians of Abraham's time, of the Sodomites, and of the Egyptians of Moses' day caused the Shekhinah to withdraw gradually from the first to the seventh heaven. Cf. also *GenR* 18:7, *CantR* 5:1 (Simon 228, Dunski 126).

78 The merits of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Levi, Kohath, Amram, and Moses each brought the Shekhinah down by one level until it returned to earth.

of the completion of the Tabernacle – when the *Shekhinah* returned to it – as the day when God espoused Israel (*PRK* 1:1, Br./Kap. 4–6, Mand. 1–3).

The connection between God's betrothal with Israel and the Tabernacle is further established in *PRK* 1:2 by a reference to Cant 3:9 ("אַפִּרְיוֹן עָשָׂה לוֹ הַמֶּלֶךְ"), where the making of the palanquin is taken as an image of God constructing the Tabernacle so that He can privately communicate with Israel.[79] The identification of Solomon's palanquin with the Tabernacle is confirmed by parallels between the parts of the palanquin described in Cant 3:9–10 and the parts of the Tabernacle described in Exodus.[80]

The nuptial metaphor continues in *PRK* 1:3 with a commentary on Cant 3:11 (where the daughters of Zion are exhorted to behold King Solomon "*with the crown with which his mother crowned him on the day of his wedding, the day of the gladness of his heart*"). As in other texts, Solomon (שלמה) is a figure of God (המלך שהשלום שלו), and the daughters of Zion represent the children of Israel who are bidden to behold Him. Solomon's crown is thus God's "crown" that He wore on the day of His wedding – the Tent of Meeting which, like a crown, is topped with blue, purple and scarlet.[81] Within this nuptial context, the cosmic symbolism of the earthly Tabernacle is also highlighted. Made after the pattern of the heavenly tabernacle that was shown to Moses on the mountain

79 The reason for the Tabernacle is explained in a parable from R. Judah bar Ila'i: a king talked freely to his young daughter while she was still small, but after she grew up the king ordered to make a pavilion for her so that he could speak to her in privacy. The care-free relationship between king and young daughter reflects the public relationship between God and Israel in Egypt, at the Red Sea, and at Sinai. But after they accepted the Torah (= the daughter reached puberty) it was no longer fitting for God to speak to them in public and so He commanded the construction of the Tabernacle as the place of private encounter between Him and His people.

80 The parts of the palanquin are its boards of wood (identified with the Tabernacle's boards of wood, Exod 26:15), pillars of silver (= the Tabernacle's silver hooks, Exod 27:10); support of gold (= the Tabernacle's boards overlaid with gold, Exod 26:29); seat of purple (= the blue and purple veil of the Holy of Holies, Exod 26:31); and the palanquin's inside "*paved with love*," representing the study of Torah and merits of the righteous, or the presence of the *Shekhinah*. Within this context of love, the Tent of Meeting was filled with the splendor of the *Shekhinah*, just as a cave on the edge of the sea is filled with the sea, and yet the sea is not diminished; this was accomplished on the day that Moses completed the Tabernacle, Israel's "bridal day" (Num 7:1; Br./Kap. 8, Mand. 4).

81 By an astute parable, even Solomon's *mother* (Cant 3:11) is equated with the bride Israel, using the example of a king who had a daughter whom he loved so much that he called her various names of endearment such as "my sister" and "my mother." In the same way, the Holy One in His endearment of Israel at first called her "*my daughter*" (Ps 45:11), then "*my sister*" (Cant 5:1) and finally "*my mother*" (Isa 51:4).

(Exod 25:40), its standing boards of shittim (Exod 26:15) reflect the standing Seraphim (Isa 6:2), and its golden clasps represent the stars of the firmament. The conformity of the earthly Tabernacle to the heavenly enables God to leave His heavenly counselors and to shrink His *Shekhinah* presence to dwell among His people below. As for the "*day of* [*Solomon's*] *wedding*" and "*day of gladness of his heart*," these are taken to mean the day of God's betrothal of Israel and the day He entered the Tent of Meeting, or the day He entered the Tent of Meeting and the day of the construction of the Temple.[82]

The cosmic role of the Tabernacle continues to be expounded in *PRK* 1:4 (Br./Kap. 13–14, Mand. 8–10), which opens with a commentary on God's cosmic omnipresence and omnipotence as described in Prov 30:4.[83] The ascending into heaven and descending, gathering wind in one's fists, binding the waters in one's garments and establishing the ends of the earth are primarily attributed to God. Yet these actions are also those of righteous men such as Elijah and especially Moses who ascended and descended the mountain (= heaven) and established the ends of the earth by building the Tabernacle. Num 7:1 is cited again to underline the fact that through the Tabernacle the stability of the earth was achieved: "until the Tabernacle was set up, the earth was unstable. After the Tabernacle was set up, the earth became stable" – and this is again related to ביום כלות משה. Following the *double entendre* between Israel's "bridal day" and the completion of the Tabernacle, the pun on ביום כלות משה is finally elucidated with a note saying that the defective spelling of ביום כלת משה justifies its reading as "bridal day," and hence refers to the day when God's bride entered the bridal chamber (ביומא דעלת כלתא לגנונא).

PRK 1 has masterfully crafted the story of the *Shekhinah*, from her original dwelling in the Garden of Eden, her withdrawal back to heaven due to human sin, to her gradual return to earth. This return culminates in Moses' building of the Tabernacle – portrayed as a cosmic event that sustains the world and is charged with nuptial meaning through repeated references to the Song of Songs.

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82 Br./Kap.10–12, Mand. 7–8. *PRK* 26:9 also associates the "day of his wedding" with God marrying the Torah to Israel on Sinai, and the "day of gladness of his heart" with God's entrance into the Tent of Meeting (Br./Kap. 406, Mandelbaum 397). *Sifra Lev* 9:1 (§99) identifies the King Solomon of Cant 3:11 with God, and his "crown" with the Tent of Meeting. "His mother" refers to Israel, the "day of his espousals" is the day on which the Shekhinah came to rest on the house, and the "day of gladness of his heart" is the day when fire came down from heaven to consume the offering on the altar. Cf. p. 295 n. 12 for the full list of parallels. *CantR* 3:11 (below, p. 336) follows *PRK*'s interpretation.

83 "Who has ascended into heaven, or descended? Who has gathered the wind in His fists? Who has bound the waters in a garment? Who has established all the ends of the earth?" (Prov 30:4).

6.3.3.2 Piska 12

Piska 12 is the lesson for Pentecost, discussing Exodus 19:1 – the giving of Torah and its many levels of eternal meaning. Accordingly, its nuptial symbolism revolves around the Sinai event, portrayed as the climax of the entire history that preceded it. The piska begins with an account of the original commandments given to Adam in the Garden, and then to Noah, Abraham and the other patriarchs. All these were surpassed at Sinai when God gave 613 commandments to Israel. In section 3, the Shulamite's longing – "*sustain me with raisin cakes, refresh me with apples; for I am sick with love*" (Cant 2:5) – refers to Israel's longing for the *halakhot* and words of Torah, and her lovesickness is every man's yearning to hear a word of Scripture or of *agaddah*. The words of Torah are compared to spiced wine (קונדיטון), containing wine, honey and pepper, just as Torah has the goodness of wine (cf. Cant 1:2), the sweetness of honey and the sharpness of pepper (*PRK* 12:5; Br./Kap. 232, Mand. 208). The Canticle returns in 12:10: "*as an apple tree among the trees of the woods, so is my beloved among the sons*" (Cant 2:3). As the apple tree is shunned because it gives no shade, so the nations shunned the Holy One on the day of the giving of Torah, while Israel delighted to sit in His shadow. This is followed by a declaration of the nuptial dimension of the Sinai revelation, where the giving of the Torah to Israel is equated with the bride entering the *hupah*:

> . . . consider an analogy with a king who betrothed a noble woman and set a time [for the wedding]. When the time came, he was told, "The hour has come for the bride to enter the nuptial chamber" (שעה שתיכנס לחופה). So, too, when the time came for the Torah to be given, the announcement was made, "The time has come for the Torah to be given to Israel." (*PRK* 12:11, Br./Kap.235, Mand. 211)[84]

84 Other nuptial parables follow: just as a king decided to count the years of this era beginning with the month of the wedding of his daughter, so God decreed that the years of this era should be counted beginning with the month of the giving of Torah – equated with the daughter's wedding. In another parable, Israel is compared to a noble woman whom a king wanted to marry; but he first wished to do something generous on her behalf before asking her hand. So he "clothed [her] in embroidered cloth" (citing the destitute maiden of Ezek 16:10), brought her safely across the Red Sea, and delivered her from the Amalekites. R. Elazar tells of a similar story: the king gave the woman loaves of bread, spiced wine, birds, and figs, which are respectively figures of the manna (Exod 16:4), water from the well (Num 21:17), quails (Num 11:31), and honey from the rock (Deut 32:13). In a final parable, R. Abba bar Yudan tells of a king who had previously forbidden marriages with people from across the sea. But when he gave his own daughter in marriage [to one beyond the sea], he withdrew the decree. So too, before the Torah was given, God

In *PRK* 12:22, the giving of the Ten Commandments (Exod 20:2) is considered in light of God's chariot and the myriads of ministering angels present at Sinai according to Ps 68:18; it is also associated with Ezekiel's *Merkavah*: the Midrash claims that "with the Holy One there came down 22,000 chariots, and each and every chariot was like the chariot which Ezekiel saw." Despite the beautiful radiance of the angels, the Lord outshines them all, being identified with the beloved of Cant 5:10 who is *white and ruddy, chief among ten thousand* (Br./Kap. 243–44). In 12:24, the Midrash describes the various "forms" under which God appeared to Israel, some familiar from the *Mekhilta*: as a mighty man waging war at the Sea, a scribe who teaches Torah at Sinai, an elder teaching Torah in the days of Daniel, and a young man (בחור) in the days of Solomon who is "*like Lebanon, young* (בחור) *as the cedars*" (Cant 5:15; (Br./Kap. 248–49)). The great nuptial encounter with the divine Lover at Sinai is therefore also a vision of His divine glory as it appeared at the greatest moments of revelation in the history of Israel.

6.3.3.3 Piska 19

Piskas 16–22 are dedicated to the haftarah readings (all from Isaiah) of the seven Sabbaths of Consolation following the Ninth of Ab. They are messages of hope and comfort for Israel, who is exhorted not to despair in the face of exile but to look forward to the glorious restoration of Zion to come. The nuptial symbolism here is therefore primarily eschatological. Piska 19 is on Isa 51:12 ("*I, I am He who comforts you*"). In discussing the hardships of exile, 19:4 compares the Torah to a marriage settlement: A king betrothed a noblewoman and wrote out a pledge of a substantial settlement (כתובה מרובה), promising her elegant chambers (חופות), ornaments and treasures before he traveled to a far country for many years. Her companions eventually began to mock her for waiting so long for her absent husband, telling her to find herself another man. She remained faithful by going into her house, reading her כתובה and being comforted until the king came back. The parable is an image of the nations of the world who mock Israel for sacrificing herself to God and remaining faithful to Torah.[85] The story is also eschatological: the return of the king to His wife is

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decreed the separation of heaven and earth (cf. Ps 115:16), but after the Torah was given from heaven, God withdrew this decree and enabled the union between heaven and earth (Himself and Israel) at Sinai, when Moses went up to God and He came down on the mountain (Exod 19:3, 20) (Br./Kap.235–37; Mand. 211–12).

85 The nations say to Israel: "How long will you sacrifice yourselves for your God, giving up your lives for Him, letting yourselves be slain for His sake? . . . Get yourselves over to us, and we shall make you captains, prefects, and commanders-in-chief!" Israel's reply to the

the final time of redemption when God returns to Israel and marvels that she waited for Him all these years. She responds that her faithfulness is only due to the Torah/כתובה that he gave her before leaving.[86]

6.3.3.4 Piskas 20 and 21

If the nuptial symbolism of Piska 19 is one of *hope*, encouraging patient endurance in the face of adversity, the next piskas elaborate on the glories of the eschatological wedding. Piska 20 accompanies Isa 54:1, which foretells the future restoration of Zion when the once-barren Jerusalem will become miraculously fruitful and rise up to the divine throne of glory. Commenting on this passage, the Midrash portrays Zion as the last of seven barren wives whom God finally blesses with children. Hope is expressed that Zion will one day no longer be exiled and barren but restored to her former splendor. Her present barrenness is equated with the Temple's desolation (*PRK* 20:5), but the age to come, when "*there will be an abundance of grain in the earth*" (Ps 72:16) is described as a restoration of the abundance of the Garden of Eden that Adam and Eve enjoyed before the fall (*PRK* 20:6). Protology makes place for eschatology in the last section (*PRK* 20:7) where the Sages turn their attention to the future Jerusalem: not only will the barren wife become fruitful again; in the messianic age she will also become the throne and resting place of the Lord (Jer 3:17, Ps 132:14) (Br./Kap.333–36, Mand. 313–17).

Piska 21, commenting on Isa 60:1, continues with the theme of the restoration of Zion and how God will bestow the radiance of His glory upon the city. It also speaks about the eternity of the Temple as part of God's design, envisioned as built, destroyed and rebuilt in Zion from the origins of creation. In an original twist of the nuptial motif, Resh Lakish tells a parable about a king whose daughter was sought by a number of unworthy men for marriage. These were

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nations is to go into synagogues and into houses of study, take the Torah Scroll and read in it [God's pledges to her]: "*For I will look on you favorably and make you fruitful, multiply you and confirm My covenant with you*" (Lev 26:9)." Cf. *Mekh Shirata* 3; *Sifre Deut* 343 above.

86 This is followed by another eschatological nuptial parable in *PRK* 19:5, commenting on Isa 51:12, about a king who became angry at his wife, deposed her as queen and cast her out of the palace. After some time he wished to restore her to her place, but she requested that he double his marriage settlement (כתובה) to her. And so at Sinai God used the word אָנֹכִי only once in declaring "אָנֹכִי ה׳ אֱלֹהֶיךָ" (Exod 20:2), but in the world to come He will double His use of the word to manifest his double comfort of His people: "אָנֹכִי אָנֹכִי הוּא מְנַחֲמְכֶם" (Isa 51:12) (Br./Kap. 326–27, Mand. 305–307). On the Torah as *Ketubah* and guarantee of God's faithfulness in Israel's exile and in the polemical debate with Christianity, cf. Kimelman, "Rabbi Yohanan and Origen on the Song of Songs," 588–94.

all sent away until a worthy candidate asked for her hand. The king agreed, saying to his daughter the words of Isaiah: "*Arise, shine; for your light has come!*" (Isa 60:1). Strangely enough, the marriage here seems to be between Israel and Zion, as God entrusts His people to Zion which proved itself more worthy than all others. Within the context of this marriage, there will come a time when God will amalgamate Sinai, Tabor and Carmel and build the Temple on top of them. The eschatological role of the Temple as beacon for all nations is associated with the mountain of the Lord spoken of by Isaiah (2:2), and its eternal cosmic role is underlined: according to R. Hiyya, its construction, destruction, and rebuilding are all implied in the first three verses of Genesis (cf. *GenR* 2:5). Finally, the Temple that will send light out into all the world is identified with Ezekiel's eschatological Temple (Ezek 43:2) and Jeremiah's eternal throne of glory (Jer 17:12) (Br./Kap. 338–42, Mand. 319–24).

6.3.3.5 Piska 22

Piska 22 is the lesson on the seventh and last Sabbath of Consolation following the Ninth of Ab. The reading is from Isaiah 61:10 (שׂוֹשׂ אָשִׂישׂ בה׳) – one of the nuptial verses in third Isaiah. Of the joy spoken of by Isaiah, a parable is told on the commandment to be fruitful and multiply. When a married woman bore no children for ten years, her husband wished to divorce her. As compensation, he told her: "take any precious object I have in my house, take it and go back to your father's house." The woman proceeded to prepare a great feast, gave her husband too much to drink so that he fell asleep, and then had him brought to her father's house. After the husband woke up, she explained that she had no object more precious than him and therefore took him to her father's house. Following this, R. Shimon bar Yochai prayed for them and they were blessed with children. The moral of the story: as the woman rejoiced over her husband, her most prized possession, so will Israel rejoice over God, since she looked forward to His deliverance for so many years – hence the Piska's opening verse: "שׂוֹשׂ אָשִׂישׂ בה׳."[87]

87 This is followed by another nuptial parable of a noble woman whose husband, sons, and sons-in-law went to a far country. Although the return of the sons and sons-in-law caused joy to her daughters-in-law and daughters, only when the husband returned did she exclaim: "Joy! Utter joy!" And so when the prophets announce to Jerusalem that her exiled sons and daughters are returning, she is glad, but only when the prophets tell her: "*Behold, your King* [*God*] *is coming to you*" (Zech 9:9), she is overjoyed and replies: "'שׂוֹשׂ אָשִׂישׂ בה" (Isa 61:10). Br./Kap. 346, Mand. 327–28. The two parables are also found in *CantR* 1:4c §2 (Simon 48–50, Dunski 28–29).

Nuptial symbolism lived out in salvation history takes again the center stage in sections 4 and 5: Isa 61:10 ("כֶּחָתָן יְכַהֵן פְּאֵר וְכַכַּלָּה תַּעְדֶּה כֵּלֶיהָ") is used to portray Israel, bedecked like a bride when she stood at Mount Sinai. This is followed by a compilation of ten places in Scripture where Israel is called "bride": six by Solomon (Cant 4:8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 5:1), three by Isaiah (49:18, 61:10, 62:5) and one by Jeremiah (33:11). The piska ends on an eschatological and messianic note, recalling the six things that God will renew in the world to come: heaven and earth, heart and spirit, the name of the Messiah, and the name of Jerusalem (Br./Kap.347–49, Mand. 329–31).

6.3.3.6 Summary: Pesikta de-Rav Kahana

For a homiletic text concerned with such a wide variety of Jewish feasts – making no claim to write a flowing narrative or to comment systematically on the Song of Songs – a strikingly coherent story of the love relationship between God/the *Shekhinah* and Israel as spanning through all of human history emerges in *PRK*. One can even discern a general progression of this story from Piska 1 to 22, beginning with the *Shekhinah*'s presence in Eden, her departure from earth, her gradual return culminating in the "wedding" at Sinai and in the construction of the Tabernacle, and – especially in the last piskas – the culmination of this wedding in the Messianic age and Temple. This final nuptial experience will involve a vision of the divine glory in its fullness, the judgment of hostile nations, and the sharing of righteous nations in the ultimate fulfillment of the marriage between God and Israel.

6.4 Canticles Rabbah

6.4.1 *Introduction*

Canticles Rabbah is an exegetical Midrash from the Land of Israel, written in mishnaic Hebrew and some Galilean Aramaic, whose final redaction is usually dated to the mid-sixth century.[88] The Midrash expounds the Song of Songs verse by verse, extensively drawing material from previous works,[89] but also

88 For introductions to *CantR*, cf. Herr, "Song of Songs Rabbah" in *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 152–54; Simon, *Midrash Rabbah*, vol. 9: *Song of Songs*, vii–viii; Strack/Stemberger, *Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash*, 342–44. For the MSS and editions of *CantR*, see Strack/Stemberger, 343; Lachs, "The Proems of Canticles Rabba" in *JQR* 56:225. In the present study of *CantR* I will follow Dunski's Hebrew text and Simon's translation.

89 Especially the *Mekhilta, Sifre, Seder Olam*, the Jerusalem Talmud, *GenR, LevR*, and *PRK*, Cf. Moshe David Herr, "Song of Songs Rabbah" in *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 152.

containing many original interpretations. The particularity of *CantR* is twofold: First, while the interpretation of the Canticle was merely peripheral to the rabbinic works examined so far (commenting on other books of Scripture and events in Israel's history, with occasional references to the Song), *CantR* is entirely dedicated to interpreting the Song as an allegory of the love between God and Israel. Hence one could say that the entire Midrash is an exercise in nuptial symbolism. Here too (as in *PRK*), the narrative encompasses the entire history of the world, beginning with creation and spanning to the days of the Messiah, with the Sinai revelation and the Tabernacle/Temple worship having pride of place. The second particularity of *CantR* is that its many layers of interpretation of each verse of the Song (often spanning many periods of the nation's history in a single verse) make it a complex and rich text (in contrast to the Targum, which reads the Song as a linear story of the history of Israel). The result is a large number of rabbinic views and meanings on any given verse, but at the same time a certain loss of the Song's narrative thread. Because of the complexity of *CantR*, we will have to be selective in our study. We will choose only a sample of texts specifically related to our four "key moments" from among the whole gamut of events in Israel's history discussed in the Midrash.[90] I make no pretense at trying to discern a coherent narrative in *CantR*, and merely propose to examine a selection of passages to see how our topic is treated in this rich work.

6.4.2 *Parasha* א

Following a long proem dedicated to the Song's title (1:1), the first verse of significance to us is *Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth* (1:2), which the Midrash (*CantR* 1:2 §1) approaches with the question "where was it said?" (היכן נאמרה?).[91] The inquiry regards the moment when the Canticle was originally "given" to Israel by God, and the rabbis propose as *locus* of this event the Red Sea, Mount Sinai, the Tent of Meeting, or the Temple. R. Hinnena b. Pappa thinks that the Song was said at the Red Sea, supporting his view by recalling the *steed in Pharaoh's chariots* of Cant 1:9, which alludes to Pharaoh pursuing the Israelites throught the Sea. As Green notes, the localization of the Song of Songs at the Red Sea implies more than the reference to Cant 1:9;

90 It will also mean ignoring some themes that occupy a major place in the Midrash, such as the relationship between the merits of the Patriarchs and God's love for Israel, the role of the Exile as time of separation between lover and beloved, and the synagogue as *locus* of communion between God and Israel in the absence of the Temple.

91 Simon 20–22, Dunski 12–13. On the "giving" of the Song as a mystical level of Torah, cf. above, p. 296 n. 15.

it is probably an allusion to the midrash in *Mekh Shirata* 3–4 where "the God whom the handmaiden [Israel] sees at the Sea is none other than that black-curled young man whom the children saw in Egypt, the lover of the Song of Songs!"[92] R. Judah b. R. Simon, on the other hand, argues that the Song was said at Sinai: he does this by interpreting שִׁיר הַשִּׁירִים as שִׁיר שֶׁאָמְרוּ אוֹתוֹ הַשָּׁרִים הַשּׁוֹרְרִים ("the song which the singers sang") and then connecting it with the singers of Ps 68:26: "קִדְּמוּ שָׂרִים אַחַר נֹגְנִים". The context of the Psalm reveals that it is situated at Mount Sinai, which "shook at the presence of God" (Ps 68:8) when He appeared there in His "Holy Place" in thousands of chariots (רֶכֶב אֱלֹהִים רִבֹּתַיִם אַלְפֵי שִׁנְאָן אֲדֹנָי בָּם סִינַי בַּקֹּדֶשׁ) (Ps 68:18). According to R. Nathan, God Himself sang the Song at Sinai because the expression "אֲשֶׁר לִשְׁלֹמֹה" means that it belongs to המלך שהשלום שלו. R. Yohanan concurs that the Song was given on Sinai. He reads Cant 1:2 as "may He cause kisses to issue for us from His mouth" (יוציא לנו נשיקות מתוך פיהו), which are the words and commandments that God gave to Israel.[93] R. Meir holds that the Song was said in the Tent of Meeting, and the rabbis argue that it was given in the Temple, both supporting their view on the basis of the same interpretation of Cant 4:16 (עוּרִי צָפוֹן וּבוֹאִי תֵימָן הָפִיחִי גַנִּי יִזְלוּ בְשָׂמָיו יָבֹא דוֹדִי לְגַנּוֹ וְיֹאכַל פְּרִי מְגָדָיו), where the "*north*" (צָפוֹן) represents the burnt offering killed on the north side of the altar, and the "*south*" (תֵּימָן) indicates the peace offerings slaughtered on the south side.[94] Other associations are made (some familiar from *LevR* and *PRK*): "*my garden*" refers to the Tent or Temple, "*let his spices flow*" alludes to the incense of spices offered in the sanctuary, "*let my beloved come to his garden*" is an invitation to the *Shekhinah* to enter the sanctuary, "*and eat his delicious fruits*" refers to God receiving the sacrifices. The rabbis add that all following

92 Cf. Green, "The Children in Egypt," 452–56 and above, p. 300. Cant 1:2 is interpreted as "let the Holy Spirit rest upon us (ישרי עלינו) and we will sing before Him many songs" (נאמר לפניו שירות). Thus the lover's "kisses" represent the Holy Spirit upon Israel, and their response is the Song of the Sea that they uttered after their deliverance. The connection between divine gift and human response is seen in the resemblance between ישרי and שיר.

93 Alternative views include the mediation of an angel who carried God's words to each Israelite and asked if they were willing to accept them, upon which the angel "kissed" each Israelite on the mouth; or, the commandment itself asked to be received, and kissed those who were willing on the mouth. R. Gamaliel also favors Mount Sinai as the *locus* of the Song, but he holds that those who sang it were the ministering angels or "singers on high" that descended on the Mount at the moment of the theophany. When the Lord gave the commandments (the kisses) to Israel, they too wished to partake of His love, and sang: "May He impart to us of the kisses which He gave to His sons."

94 Cf. LevR 9:6 and above, p. 315.

verses of the Song refer to the Temple, while R. Aha specifically identifies it with Solomon's palanquin (Cant 3:9).[95] The rabbis thus situate the moment when the Song of Songs was "said" to Israel either at one of the two major stations of their redemption – the Red Sea or Mount Sinai – or in one of the sanctuaries that commemorated the same redemption – the Tabernacle or Temple.

In *CantR* 1:2 §3 (Simon 24–25, Dunski 14), R. Yohanan elaborates upon his view that "*Let him kiss me . . .*" refers to Israel when they went up to Mount Sinai. He tells the parable of a king who wanted to marry a wife of a noble family and sent an envoy to speak with her. The lady said to the envoy: "I am not worthy to be his handmaid, but all the same I desire to hear from his own mouth." The king here represents God, the woman is Israel, and the envoy is Moses. The parable conveys the idea that Israel was not content to hear only the words of Moses but wanted to "hear from God's own mouth," that is, to "receive His kisses" in the language of the Song, or to hear His voice and receive His commandments in the language of Exodus (Exod 19:8–9). Hence the "kisses" as affectionate expression of God's love to Israel are embodied in the Torah and commandements.

In *CantR* 1:2 §4 (Simon 25–26, Dunski 15) R. Judan presents an eschatological variation of this theme: Israel's longing for the "kisses of his lips" represents the people's longing for a direct and unmediated knowledge of Torah in their hearts. But God replies that this desire will only be fulfilled in the future days foretold by the prophets, when He will put His law within them (Jer 31:33) and remove their heart of stone (Ezek 36:26). In this way, a nuptial link is made between Sinai and the eschaton: Israel's desire for "kisses" is partially fulfilled by receiving the Torah and commandments at Sinai, yet only in a transitory way since they are still liable to forget what they learnt. Only when God "kisses them with the kisses of His mouth" by definitively writing His Torah on their hearts will their longing be completely fulfilled.[96]

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95 *CantR* then recalls the word play of Num 7:1 that was so extensively used in *PRK* to affirm the nuptial meaning of the Tabernacle: וַיְהִי בְּיוֹם כַּלּוֹת מֹשֶׁה לְהָקִים אֶת־הַמִּשְׁכָּן. Simon 20–21, Dunski 12. Cf. *GenR* 22:5; 34:9; *LevR* 9:6; *PRK* 1:1.

96 In *CantR* 1:2 §5 (Simon 26–27, Dunski 15–16), the kisses as a loving encounter with the Torah and commandments are compared to a king who had a cellar of wine. He mixed a cup for a first guest, then another for a second guest, but when his son came, he gave him the whole cellar. Torah is thus associated with wine, and God's revelation is progressively revealed in history, beginning with Adam, continuing with Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Judah, and concluding with Israel. While Adam and the patriarchs only received one commandment (one cup of wine), Israel received the whole Torah (the entire cellar).

Following several other midrashic associations between the Canticle, Mount Sinai and the Tabernacle,[97] *CantR* 1:5 §1 (Simon 51–53, Dunski 30) comments on the Shulamite's statement that she is "*black but comely*." The Midrash underlines Israel's blackness (sinfulness) and comeliness (forgiveness and reconciliation with God) at all the major stations of the Exodus: in Egypt, at the Passover,[98] by the Red Sea, at Horeb, at the setting up of the Tabernacle, and at later moments in the nation's history until its eschatological redemption, so that she can say: "I am black in this world and comely in the world to come."[99]

Another association between the protagonists of the Song of Songs and God/Israel at Sinai is found in *CantR* 1:12 §1 (Simon 77–80, Dunski 43–45) on עַד־שֶׁהַמֶּלֶךְ בִּמְסִבּוֹ נִרְדִּי נָתַן רֵיחוֹ. This verse was already associated with the Sinai theophany in *Mekhilta*,[100] but *CantR* makes a fuller treatment of the allegory. The rabbis dispute whether the Shulamite's smell of nard in the Canticle refers to Israel's fragrant obedience to God at Sinai, or to the stench rising up to heaven when they adored the golden calf. R. Meir takes the negative approach, but he is rebuked by R. Judah who tells him that the Song should not be expounded in a bad sense, for it was only revealed for the praise of Israel. According to him, *while the king is at his table* refers to the moment when God, the King of Kings "was at His table in the firmament" and "Israel sent forth a fragrance before Mount Sinai and said "נַעֲשֶׂה וְנִשְׁמָע" (Exod 24:7).

Further on, we encounter the Tannaitic reading of Cant 1:15–16 as classic dialogue of love between God and Israel. In *CantR* 1:15 §1 (Simon 85, Dunski 48), God declares to Israel: "הִנָּךְ יָפָה רַעְיָתִי הִנָּךְ יָפָה," and in *CantR* 1:16 §1, Israel

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In *CantR* 1:2b §3 (Simon 33–36, Dunski 19–21), the Torah/wine analogy is illustrated with a commentary on Cant 1:2b, borrowing from *Sifre Deut* 48 (above, p. 306).

97 CantR 1:4a §1 (Simon 41, Dunski 24) associates מָשְׁכֵנִי אַחֲרֶיךָ נָּרוּצָה with Israel speaking to God before Mount Sinai. In CantR 1:4a §2 (Simon 42–43, Dunski 25), the Rabbis attribute the same verse to the divine presence in the sanctuary by a play on words between מָשְׁכֵנִי and שְׁכִינָה and a link with Exod 25:8. Also, because God withdrew (משכת = סלקת) his Shekhinah from Israel after the sin of the golden calf, they yearned for Him by calling out: "*draw me, we will run after you*." Hence the place where God "draws" Israel to Himself is at Sinai, in the Tabernacle, and also in the beloved's "garden" (גַּנּוֹ) which is their bridal chamber (גְּנוּנוֹ) (cf. *LevR* 9:6; *PRK* 1:1).

98 As in *Mekh*, the blood of the Passover and of the circumcision is identified with the blood of Ezekiel's maiden (Ezek 16:6). Cf. above, p. 298, n. 24.

99 Israel's suntanned darkness is also due to their worshiping idols and turning their backs on the Sanctuary, as Ezekiel 8:16 had described (Simon 57, Dunski 33).

100 Cf. *Mekh BaHodesh* 3, 11:217 (above, p. 303) and the discussion on John 12:1–3 above, pp. 168–169.

responds to Him: הִנְּךְ יָפֶה דּוֹדִי אַף נָעִים. *CantR* 1:16 §2 further reveals that the "*leafy couch*" (עַרְשֵׂנוּ רַעֲנָנָה) where they are joined is the Temple – the home of the *Shekhinah*[101] – which is a source of stability and fruitfulness that causes the people of Israel to greatly multiply (*CantR* 1:16 §3):

> *Also our couch is leafy.* Until the Temple was built the *Shekhinah* was tossed about from place to place, as it says, *But I have walked in a tent and in a tabernacle*" (2 Sam 7:6), but after the Temple was built, [God said], *this is my resting-place for ever* (Ps 132:14) . . . *Also our couch is leafy.* Just as a couch is only for propagation, so before the Temple was built [David could say], *Go, number Israel* (1 Chr 21:2), but after it was built *Judah and Israel were many, as the sand* (1 Kgs 4:20).

6.4.3 *Parasha* ב

In *CantR* 2:1 §1–2 (Simon 91–92, Dunski 51–52), Israel is identified with the Canticle's "*rose of Sharon*" (חֲבַצֶּלֶת הַשָּׁרוֹן), again situated at the Passover in Egypt, at the Red Sea, at Mount Sinai, and in the Messianic Age through a number of puns.[102] This is followed in *CantR* 2:2–3 by other allegorical interpretations, identifying Israel in Egypt as the Canticle's *lily among thorns* and God as the beloved who is *like an apple tree*.[103] The association with Sinai continues in *CantR* 2:4 §1 (הֱבִיאַנִי אֶל־בֵּית הַיָּיִן וְדִגְלוֹ עָלַי אַהֲבָה): the lover bringing his beloved to

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101 R. Azariah compares God's dwelling with the story of a king who went out in the desert and slept in a short bed that was uncomfortable and cramping for his limbs. When he came to the city he was brought a longer bed upon which he could stretch himself and loosen his limbs: "So until the Temple was built the *Shechinah* was confined between the two staves of the ark, but when the Temple was built, then . . . *the staves were prolonged*."

102 Israel is called a חֲבַצֶּלֶת because she made a shade (צל) for God by the hand of Bezalel (בצלאל) when he made the Ark of the Covenant; she is "*of Sharon*" because she sang a song (שירה) together with Moses at the Red Sea. Alternatively, she is חֲבַצֶּלֶת הַשָּׁרוֹן because she is the beloved one (חביבה) who was "hidden in the shadow" (חבויה בצלן) of Egypt where she blossomed forth in good deeds like a rose and chanted before Him a song on the eve of the Passover. Israel was also hidden in the shadow of the Sea and of Mount Sinai, where she blossomed in good deeds when she declared נַעֲשֶׂה וְנִשְׁמָע (Exod 24:7). The same verse is interpreted eschatologically in *CantR* 2:1 §2.

103 In *CantR* 2:2 §1 (Simon 94–96, Dunski 53–54), R. Eliezer applies Cant 2:2, *like a lily among thorns*, to the redemption of Israel from Egypt. In *CantR* 2:3 §1–3 (Simon 99–101, Dunski 56–57), God is portrayed as the lover who is "*like an apple tree*" (Cant 2:3), shunned by all people on the day of the giving of the Torah, when only Israel longed to "*sit in his shadow.*" According to R. Levi, the woman's longing is an image of Israel longing for the Torah and

the "*house of wine*" is interpreted as God bringing Israel to Sinai, called a "great cellar of wine" to symbolize the abundant outpouring of love and joy that flows from the study of Torah, itself identified with the "*banner of love*" that the lover sets over his beloved.[104]

The Song of Songs is also interpreted eschatologically: In *CantR* 2:7 §1, the adjuration to the daughters of Jerusalem to "*not stir up nor awaken love until it pleases*" is an exhortation to Israel not to rebel against the yoke of the foreign dominations nor attempt to return from exile by force – for this will be the role of the King Messiah. The overlap of periods in history is also manifest in *CantR* 2:8–9, where the beloved leaping over the mountains refers to Moses at the time of the Passover, to the Messiah at the end of days, or to God leaping over the great moments of the Exodus (Egypt, the Red Sea and Sinai) and forward to the future redemption.[105]

In *CantR* 2:14 §2–4, 6 (Simon 129–133, Dunski 72–73) we encounter again the *dove in the clefts of the rock*, namely Israel as dove fleeing a hawk (the Egyptians), flying into a rock only to find a serpent lurking there (the Sea). The rabbis also identify the dove with Israel at Mount Sinai, in the Tent of Meeting, and in the Temple, where the meaning of the beloved's "voice" and "face" is reinterpreted each time according to the context:

Tabernacle (§3), and his fruit "*sweet to my taste*" refers to the time when Israel was at Mount Sinai feasting on the words of Torah.

104 In *CantR* 2:5 §2 (Simon 105–106, Dunski 59), Israel leaving Egypt is compared to a king's son recovering from an illness who could not go to school for three months until he ate and drank well enough to recover. In the same way, when Israel came out of Egypt they needed time to gather their strength by enjoying the spring, quails and manna, and only after three months (Exod 19:1) they were ready to receive the Torah.

105 Cf. *PRK* 5:8. The eschatological perspective is also seen in the Midrash's treatment of Cant 2:10–13, where the lover exhorts his bride to rise up and leave as the winter and rains come to an end and the buds spring forth. The Midrash ties this verse to the end of the 400 years in Egypt, the parting of the Sea, the Song of Moses, and also to the forty years in the wilderness, the seventy years of Babylonian captivity, and the oppression of Israel by the "kingdom of the Cutheans," leading to the revelation of the kingdom of heaven by the Messiah (Simon 122–26, Dunski 69–72). In *CantR* 3:1 (Simon 142–43, Dunski 80), the Shulamite lying at night on her bed, seeking her lover, is interpreted as Israel's "nights" in the exiles of Egypt, Babylon, Media, Greece, and Edom, hoping for the final redemption.

Dove in clefts of Rock/Israel	Israel in recess of the Sea (R. Eleazar)	Israel in shadow of Mt. Sinai (R. Akiva)	Israel in shelter of the Tent of Meeting (R. Huna, R. Aha)	Israel in shelter of the Temple (R. Tanhuma)
"Face"	God's salvation (Exod 14:13)	Thunder, lightning, smoke (Exod 20:15)	Congregation assembled at door of Tent (Lev 8:4)	People assembled when Ark is brought into the Temple (1 Kgs 8:1); Offerings (8:63)
"Voice"	Song of the Sea (Exod 15:1)	נַעֲשֶׂה וְנִשְׁמָע (Exod 24:17)	People shouting when fire consumes the offerings (Lev 9:24)	Trumpeters and singers in Temple (2 Chr 5:13)

6.4.4 *Parasha* ג

In *CantR* 3:6 §2 and 3:7 §4–5 (Simon 162–63, Dunski 91–92), the Rabbis interpret *Solomon's couch* (מִטָּתוֹ שֶׁלִּשְׁלֹמֹה) coming out of the wilderness "*like pillars of smoke*" (Cant 3:6–7) as the Israelites who came out of Egypt, led by the pillar of cloud.[106] Commenting on the same verse, Rabbi compares Israel's sin (the golden calf) with Adam's sin in the Garden: before Adam sinned he could listen to God's voice boldly and without fear, but after he sinned he was frightened and hid himself. Likewise, before Israel sinned they saw seven fiery partitions pressing on one another yet did not fear nor tremble, but after they sinned, they could not even look at the face of the intermediary, Moses.

In an impressive cosmic recapitulation, Solomon's palanquin (Cant 3:9) is identified with the tabernacle (3:9 §1; 3:10 §1),[107] the Ark of the Covenant (3:10 §2),

106 Solomon represents God (המלך שהשלום שלו), the couch is His clans and tribes, and the sixty mighty men are the sixty myriads of Israelites who came out of Egypt.

107 As in *PRK*, *CantR* cites the parable of the king (God) who formerly spoke to his daughter (Israel) in public, but after she matured, he made a pavilion (the Tabernacle) so he could speak with her in privacy. Many of the same contextual verses as *PRK* describe the places where Israel saw God: the early time of love in the desert (Hos 11:1), the Passover

the Temple (3:10 §3), the world, and the heavenly Throne of Glory corresponding to the earthly sanctuary (3:10 §4):

Palanquin:	Tabernacle (R. Azariah)	Ark (R. Judah b. R. Ilai)	Temple (anonymous)	World (anonymous)	Throne of Glory (anonymous)
Wood of Lebanon	Boards of acacia wood (Exod 26:15)	Ark of acacia wood (Exod 37:1)	Wood of Lebanon (2 Chr 2:15)	World formed out of Holy of Holies (אבן שתיה)	Celestial Holy of Holies (Exod 15:17)
Pillars of silver	Silver hooks of pillars (Exod 27:10)	Silver staves inside the Ark	Pillars at porch of Temple (1 Kgs 7:21)	Tree of human descent	Pillars of heaven tremble (Job 26:11)
Support of gold	Boards overlaid with gold (Exod 26:29)	Ark overlaid with pure gold (Exod 37:2)	All buildings overlaid w/ gold	Produce of earth & fruit of tree sold for gold	Words of Torah (Ps 19:11)
Seat of purple	Veil of blue and purple (Exod 26:31)	Veil/ark-cover	Veil of blue, purple, crimson (2 Chr 3:14)	God "rides upon the heaven" (Deut 33:26)	He who rides on the heaven of heavens (Ps 68:33)
Interior paved with love	Merits of Torah/ righteous; *Shekhinah* (1 Kgs 8:11, Ezek 10:4)	Merits of Torah;[a] *Shechinah* (Exod 25:22)	Merits of Torah/ righteous; *Shechinah*	Merits of Torah/ righteous; *Shechinah*	4 creatures of Ezek's merkavah (1:10) on throne of Glory

[a] The palanquin as Ark whose interior is "paved with love" is compared to a litter that a king made for his beautiful and gracious daughter – the Torah, whose beauty is best admired from inside the Ark (*CantR* 3:10 §2).

(Exod 12:23), the Red Sea (Exod 14:31), and Sinai (Deut 33:2). The palanquin's pillars of silver, support of gold, purple seat, and "interior paved with love" respectively refer to the Tabernacle's pillar hooks of silver, the boards overlaid with gold, the veil of blue and purple, and the merits of the Torah/righteous or presence of the *Shekhinah* filling the sanctuary (cf. 1 Kgs 8:11, Ezek 10:4) (Simon 165–66, Dunski 92). Cf. *PRK* 1:2 and above, p. 321.

The palanquin's cosmic symbolism is especially seen in its connection to the *even shetiyah*, the stone believed to be the foundation of the world:

> [A palanquin] *of wood of Lebanon*: this intimates that it [the world] was formed out of the earthly Holy of Holies, as we have learnt [b. Yoma 53b, 54b]: When the ark was taken away, a stone was left in its place which had been there from the days of the early prophets, and which was called *shetiyah*. Why was it called *shetiyah*? Because on it, all the world was based. (*CantR* 3:10 §4, Simon 169–70, Dunski 95)

The cosmic symbolism of the palanquin as *Temple* is further highlighted by the miraculously fruitful properties of its gold, which was used to make supernatural trees whose fruit served for the Temple's maintenance:

> For when Solomon built the Temple, he fashioned out of this gold all manner of trees, and when the trees in the field produced their fruit, these in the Temple also produced fruit, and the fruit used to drop off and it was gathered and put aside for the repair of the Temple. (*CantR* 3:10 §3, Simon 169, Dunski 95)

Thus the palanquin's simultaneous identification with the Ark, the Tabernacle/Temple, the world, and the throne of glory indicates that the sanctuary is seen not only as a sacred place of nuptial encounter between God and His people but also as a microcosm representing the entire world. Conversely, the world's identification with the palanquin means that the universe is itself a macro- or cosmic Temple in which the divinity lovingly dwells.[108]

CantR 3:11 §2 (Simon 173–75, Dunski 98) follows closely the interpretation of *PRK* 1:3 on the same verse, seeing the "*crown of Solomon's mother*" as the Tent of Meeting, modeled on the splendors of the heavenly sanctuary and the cosmic order. The "*day of his espousals*" is the day of Sinai, when Israel was

108 Similarly, in *Mekh Shirata* 10 (Laut. 11:77–79), the "mountain of [God's] inheritance" – His "dwelling" and "sanctuary" in Exod 15:17 – refers to the Temple – God's Throne below on earth which corresponds to His divine Throne in heaven (cf. Ps 11:4; 1 Kgs 8:13). The Temple is associated with the creation of the world and is even superior to it: for whereas God "spoke" the world into existence with a mere word (Ps 33:6) and created it with only one hand (Isa 48:13), the Temple required real work since He actually had to "make" it (it did not suffice to "speak a word"), and it required the use of both hands (Exod 15:17). At the same time, the Temple on God's holy mountain is eschatological, since sacrifices will be offered there after Israel is ingathered from their final exile (cf. Ezek 20:40). Cf. also *Mekh de-RaShBY Shirata* 34:1.

"like bridegrooms" (כחתנים), and the "*day of the gladness of his heart*" refers to the words of Torah. Alternatively, the "*day of his espousals*" is (the consecration of) the Tent of Meeting, and the "*day of the gladness of his heart*" is the consecration of the Temple.[109] These midrashic traditions associating "Solomon's wedding" with Israel's cultic worship show that for the Sages, the giving of the Torah and consecration of the Tent of Meeting at Sinai, the dedication of the Temple, and the presence of the *Shekhinah* in the sanctuary were all considered to be different facets of the romance between God and Israel.

6.4.5 *Parashot* ד, ה

Even the most anthropomorphic verses of the Canticle are interpreted as referring to Israel at Sinai or the Temple service.[110] In Cant 4:12, the Shulamite is told: "*your shoots* (שְׁלָחַיִךְ) *are an orchard of pomegranates.*" *CantR* 4:12 (Simon 220–22, Dunski 122–23), takes this as an image of what a man might send (שלח) to his betrothed: and so the *Knesset Israel* presented 13 things to God (the materials for the construction of the Tabernacle, Exod 25:3–7), and God presented 13 things to her in return – the gifts bestowed upon the destitute maiden (Jerusalem) of Ezekiel 16: richly woven work (purple of Tabernacle), badger skin (cover of Tabernacle), fine linen, silk (cloud of glory), ornaments (weapons), bracelets (the tablets of the covenant), a neck chain (the word of Torah), a ring (the holy crown), earrings (the headplate of the high priest), and a beautiful crown (the *Shekhinah*). The remaining three gifts are the gold, silver, and renown of the splendid maiden going forth among the nations (Ezek 16:13–14).

In *CantR* 5:1 §1 (Simon 228–30, Dunski 126–27), as in *PRK*, the Song's "garden" is associated with the *Shekhinah*'s bridal chamber and Her original home in the Garden of Eden,[111] and the lover's words "*I have come into my garden*"

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109 Cf. *PRK* 1:3 above, p. 321 and p. 295 n. 12 for the full list of parallels.

110 "*Your hair is like a flock of goats*" (Cant 4:1) refers to Israel before Mount Sinai; "*your teeth are like a flock of ewes*" are the garments of the high priesthood; "*your mouth is lovely*" is the hymns chanted by the Levites in the Temple; and "*your teeth are like a flock of ewes*" are the daily burnt offerings (Simon 182, 188, 192–93, Dunski 102, 105, 107–108). In *CantR* 4:7 §1 (Simon 202, Dunski 113), "*You are fair, my love*" (Cant 4:7) refers to Israel before Sinai proclaiming נַעֲשֶׂה וְנִשְׁמָע. In *CantR* 4:8 §1 (Simon 206, Dunski 115), the lover's exhortation to his bride to "*come with me from Lebanon*" refers to the Temple; Cf. *Mekh Pisḥa* 14 (Laut. 1:115). In *CantR* 4:9 §1, the verse "*You have ravished my heart, my sister, my bride*" is given multiple associations, being linked with the blood of the Passover and of the circumcision, the Red Sea, Mount Sinai, the wilderness, and the setting up of the Tabernacle (Simon 211–12, Dunski 117–18).

111 "*I am come into my garden* (גַּנִּי) as if to say, to my bridal-chamber (גִּנּוּנִי): to the place which was my real home originally; for was not the original home of the *Shekhinah* in the lower

refer to the *Shekhinah* entering the Tabernacle after a long exile, when it was completed by Moses (בְּיוֹם כַּלּוֹת מֹשֶׁה) (Num 7:1). Accordingly, the ensuing exposition of Cant 5:1 refers to Israel's sacrificial liturgy: "*I have gathered my myrrh with my spice*" refers to the incense and frankincense rising from the sanctuary; "*I have eaten my honeycomb with my honey*" speaks of the parts of the burnt-offering and sacrificial parts of the most holy things; "*I have drunk my wine with my milk*" refers to the drink-offerings and sacrificial parts of the lesser holy things, and the Song's exhortation to eat and drink is taken to have been given to Moses and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu while they were on top of Mount Sinai.[112] *CantR* 5:9–16 (Simon 238–39f, Dunski 131) has much to say about the Shulamite's description of her lover, describing Him as "*white and ruddy*," etc. . . . These interpretations borrow heavily from previous Tannaitic and Amoraitic readings of this passage, and there is no need to return to them, except to mention that here too the "*white and ruddy*" beloved is a figure of God, situated in the land of Egypt, at the Red Sea and in the world to come.[113]

6.4.6 *Parashot* ח, ו

In *CantR* 6:4 §1 (Simon 259, Dunski 142), the Shulamite who is "*beautiful as Tirzah* (תִּרְצָה)" and "*comely as Jerusalem*" (Cant 6:4) is identified with the Temple sacrifices, because the Israelites become acceptable (מתרצים) through the flocks sacrificed in Jerusalem (cf. Ezek 36:38). In *CantR* 6:9 §2 (Simon 266, Dunski 146), R. Yudan applies the "*sixty queens*" of Cant 6:8 to the sixty companies of righteous who sit in the Garden of Eden under the Tree of Life and study the Torah, while the Rabbis apply the same verse to the number of Israelites who came out of Egypt.

As the Canticle draws to a close, someone wonders: "*Who is this coming up from the wilderness, leaning upon her beloved? I awakened you under the apple tree. There your mother was in travail with you; there she who bore you was in travail*" (Cant 8:5). *CantR* 8:5 §1 (Simon 303–4, Dunski 168) interprets this as Israel coming up from the wilderness, and the "*apple tree*" under which she

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realm, as it says, *and they heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden* (Gen 3:3)?" Cf. *LevR* 9:6 and *PRK* 1:1 above.

112 Cf. *CantR* 1:4 §2 above; *PRK* 1:1; also *Seder Olam Rabbah* 7. In *CantR* 5:2 §2 (Simon 232, Dunski 128) "*My beloved knocks*" by the hand of Moses, when the Lord wished to announce that He would judge the Egyptian firstborn. Here too, following *Mekh Pisḥa* 5, Ezekiel's midrash (16:6) is quoted as referring to the blood of the Passover and of the circumcision, and the settings of the Red Sea and Sinai return once again.

113 The beloved's features are also identified with the Torah and given a cosmic sense. Cf. *LevR* 25:8 above, p. 318 n. 72.

rests is Sinai. The beloved's "*mother*" (whose identity is unclear) was "*in travail*" (חִבְּלָה) when they said נַעֲשֶׂה וְנִשְׁמָע (Exod 24:7), but "wounded" (חוּבְּלָה) when they worshiped the golden calf (Exod 32:4). On Israel's betrayal at the very place where they sealed their covenant with God, R. Shimon b. Halafta makes a poignant statement: "shame on the bride who misconducts herself in her very bridal chamber."[114] Nevertheless, in *CantR* 8:6 (Simon 305–306, Dunski 169), God's love for Israel continues to be affirmed: "*Set me as a seal upon your heart*" (Cant 8:6) is yet another description of Israel at Sinai, where the Lord guarantees them His protection.

6.4.7 *Summary: Canticles Rabbah*

Summarizing our study of *CantR* is no easy task due to the complexity of the text and its lack of a continuous narrative. We have gathered a collection of unorganized and fragmented ideas and motifs which share the fact that they are all related in some way to the Song of Songs. This indicates that, more than the other texts seen so far, *CantR* presents the covenant between God and Israel as a romance between the two lovers of the Song of Songs, played out through the various moments of the nation's history. Even though this thematic material appears in chaotic and disjointed form, we have noticed the existence of the following motifs:

First, the covenant between God and Israel is sometimes linked with the origins of the world and with Adam in Eden. This is seen in the parable on the progressive nature of God's revelation in salvation history (one cup of wine given to Adam and the patriarchs, and the entire cellar given to Israel at Sinai) (1:2). Correlations between nuptiality, protology, and covenant are seen in the comparison between Adam's sin in the garden and Israel's sin of the golden calf (3:6–7). They are also visible in the cosmic symbolism of Solomon's palanquin, associated with the Ark and Temple, the *even shetiyah* in the Holy of Holies upon which the world is based, and the heavenly Throne of Glory (3:9–10). Finally, there is the association of the Song's "garden" (the bride) with the *Shekhinah*'s bridal chamber and original home in Eden (5:1), and the Torah's association with an eschatological Garden of Eden and Tree of Life (6:8).

Mount Sinai is one of the chief contenders as the place where the Song itself was "said" to Israel (1:2), and the rabbis spare no effort in pointing to the Exodus and Sinai as the setting *par excellence* for the romance between YHWH and His people. Some of the metaphors used to make this point are the blackness of the Shulamite as image of the golden calf (1:5), the fragrance of nard as

114 On the golden calf as spiritual adultery, cf. *b. Shabbat* 88b; *b. Gittin* 36b; *ARN-A* 20; Pope, *Song of Songs*, 349.

Israel's pleasing response to the covenant (1:12), the lover *standing behind our wall* as God descending upon Sinai (2:9), the *dove in the clefts of the rock* representing Israel standing before the mountain (2:14), and the *day of* [*Solomon's*] *espousals* as the day when they received the Torah (3:11). Likewise, the Torah and commandments are represented by a number of images from the Canticle such as the lover's *kisses*, the best *wine* (1:2), the *circlets of gold* and *studs of silver* (1:11), the sweet fruit of the *apple tree* (2:3), and the lover's *banner* (2:4).

The Tent of Meeting and Temple are the other central locations where the rabbis believed God gave the Song to Israel. It is in the sanctuary, compared to a bridal chamber, that the *Shekhinah* dwelt and enjoyed Israel's offerings (1:2, 4). Images of the Song of Songs are often taken as descriptions of the sanctuary (the *leafy couch*, the *chamber of the one who conceived me*, the *palanquin, Lebanon*), its furnishings (the beloved's *circlets of gold and studs of silver*, or the palanquin's *pillars of silver* and *support of gold* as the Tabernacle's boards and hooks, the *cedar* and *cypress* as construction materials for the Temple), or Israel's worship in it (the *dove in the clefts of the rock* as Israel, the beloved's *hair* and *teeth* as priests and levites).

Finally, by reinterpreting many of the same metaphors the Midrash constantly points towards Israel's eschatological redemption. Israel's longing for the *kisses of his mouth* (Cant 1:2) will only be fully satisfied in the world to come when the promises of the prophets are fulfilled, when she will have the comeliness of the Shulamite (1:5) and will bloom as the true rose of Sharon (2:1). The messianic age will be the blossoming springtime (2:10–13) when it is finally appropriate to *stir up* and *awaken love* (2:7) as God *leaps like a gazelle* bringing Israel to its final redemption (2:9).

If we find no cohesion or order in the use of these themes in the Midrash, the picture is quite different in the last rabbinic text to which we now turn.

6.5 The Targum on Canticles

6.5.1 *Introduction: Relation to Midrashic Literature, Dating, Structure*

The historical dimension of the nuptial metaphor comes out at its clearest in the Targum on the Song of Songs – the *terminus ad quem* of our study. While the Targum is certainly not the first work that allegorically associates the events of Israel's history with the verses of the Song, it is the first to draw out Israel's historical narrative as the "overarching structure for understanding the entire book of the Song of Songs from beginning to end,"[115] systematically translating

115 Cf. Menn, "Targum of the Song of Songs and the Dynamics of Historical Allegory,"424, 426.

the universal experience of human love into the particular events of Israel's history. Presenting the Garden of Eden, Mount Sinai, the Jerusalem Temple (Mount Zion), and the eschatological messianic age as the privileged moments of communion between the *Shekhinah* and God's people, the Targum represents the crystallization of an interpretive tendency existing since the time of the prophets and consistently developed throughout the texts we have surveyed.

The dating of the Targum is a subject of controversy. It displays numerous parallels with the exegetical tradition of early Rabbinic literature, especially *Canticles Rabbah*. But it is not clear who influenced whom. Is the Targum dependent upon the Midrash, the Midrash dependent upon the Targum, or do both derive from a common tradition? The traditional approach has been to see the Targum as dependent upon *CantR*,[116] but this approach is now disputed because it fails to take into account the fluid and dynamic state of Rabbinic tradition in late antiquity.[117] Owing to the inconclusive evidence regarding the Targum's sources, no agreement about its dating has been reached. Scholars have proposed a date of redaction oscillating between the fifth and eighth centuries CE, while recognizing that the traditions of the Targum go back much earlier.[118] In any case, the fact that the Targum *may* be a relatively late text does not detract from its usefulness for our purposes, since it remains the earliest systematic Jewish historical allegory of Israel based on the Canticle. Written from the perspective of the exile of Edom, the Targum describes God's relationship with Israel as it progresses through the pivotal periods of the nation's history. The general structure of the text could be outlined as follows:[119]

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116 Cf. Churgin, *Targum Ketuvim*, 129; Melamed, "Targum Canticles," 201–15.

117 Cf. Heinemann, "Targum Canticles and its Sources," 126–29; Alexander, *The Targum of Canticles*, 39; *ibid.* "Tradition and Originality in the Targum of the Song of Songs," 321–22.

118 Menn, "Targum of the Song of Songs and the Dynamics of Historical Allegory," 423. Cf. Manns, "Le Targum du Cantique des Cantiques," 223–301. Alexander, "Tradition and Originality in the Targum of the Song of Songs," 318–39; יוסף הייניטן, תרגום שיר השי־ רים ומקורותיו, 126–129. Alexander (Targum of Canticles, 55–58) thinks that the Targum may have been written in the eighth or ninth century. Loewe ("Apologetic Motifs in the Targum to the Song of Songs," 163–69) proposes a date shortly after the Islamic conquest of Palestine in 636–638, while Manns ("Le Targum du Cantique des Cantiques," 259) demonstrates that there is enough evidence to support an early date for the traditions of the Targum (3rd century CE as *terminus ad quem*). See the bibliographical notes above, p. 44.

119 Alexander (*Targum of Canticles*, 13, 15) outlines the Targum differently to emphasize the thrice-recurring pattern of Israel's estrangement from God, reconciliation, and communion, with three exiles (Egypt, Babylon, and Edom), three exoduses (under Moses, Cyrus, and the Messiah), culminating in three Jewish States (under Solomon, the Hasmoneans,

1. Preamble, including the Midrash of the Ten Songs and an opening benediction (1:1–2)
2. The Exodus, including the Passover, the crossing of the Red Sea, the giving of the law at Sinai, the wilderness wanderings, and the conquest of the land (1:3–3:6)
   a. First account (1:3–8); (b) Second account (1:9–2:7); (c) Third account (2:8–3:6)
3. The First Temple Period (3:7–5:1)
4. The Babylonian Exile (5:2–6:1)
5. The Second Temple Period (6:2–7:10)
6. The Exile of Edom (7:11–14)
7. The Messianic Age (8:1–12)
8. Peroration (8:13–14)

6.5.2 *The Marriage of the* Shekhinah *and Israel?*

Like *CantR*, *TgCant* reads the Song of Songs as an allegory of the marriage between God and Israel. For the targumist, it is also the story of the divine presence, the *Shekhinah*, and of her meanderings alongside God's people throughout history. The *Shekhinah* is the manifestation of the divinity on earth, united with Israel in a tender nuptial union (1:16) as long as they remain faithful to God's commandments. She guides, nourishes and protects Israel (1:4; 2:1–2), ensures her fruitfulness and multiplication (1:16), and even banishes demons (4:6).[120] The presence of the *Shekhinah* is likened to a return to the Garden of Eden (2:1). She was present at Mount Sinai (1:13; 2:3; 3:1–2) and accompanied Israel during the wilderness wanderings, appearing as the pillar of cloud/fire (1:4, 16) and dwelling in the Tabernacle (1:5; 3:2–4). She dwells in the Temple, between the cherubim (3:10; 4:6; 5:1; 6:3, 11; 8:14), but when Israel sins or is exiled, she withdraws (2:2; 5:3, 6; 6:1; 7:11) to heaven, where she originated (3:1; 5:3, 8:14). The role of the *Shekhinah* in *TgCant* causes a bit of confusion as to the nuptial relationship between God and Israel. Is she merely a substitute name for God denoting His presence among His people, or is she rather a kind of intermediary surrogate, as was Lady Wisdom? The Targum's own textual evidence and historical context seems to favor the former option. Jews in exile, now resisting the claims of Christian Trinitarianism, would likely have avoided speaking of a second hypostasis distinct from God. Still, the feminine gender

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and the Messiah): 1. From the Exile of Egypt to King Solomon (1:3–5:1); 2. From the Babylonian Exile to the Hasmonean period (5:2–7:11); 3. From the Exile of Edom to the Messiah's Coming (7:12–8:12).

120 Cf. Alexander, *Targum of Canticles*, 19.

of the *Shekhinah* creates difficulties: unlike in Wisdom literature, where the female *Shekhinah* courts individual men, in the Targum the Canticle's bridegroom is clearly YHWH, and the bride is resolutely Israel. Thus the role of the feminine *Shekhinah* as immanent manifestation of God is ambiguous. Who exactly is Israel betrothed/married to? God, the *Shekhinah*, or both? It would seem that – given the near-identification of God and His Presence – "both" might be the correct answer.

The historical perspective of the marriage between God and Israel is introduced at the outset with the "Midrash of the Ten Songs," a long exposition of the first verse of the Canticle and adaptation of an already existing midrashic tradition.[121] This Midrash lists ten songs that were "spoken in this world" by the great figures of Israel's history, from Adam to the Messiah. Among them, the Canticle is the ninth song, sung by Solomon and called "the best of them all." This indicates that the Targum's narrative will be historical, spanning from creation to consummation, from Adam to the Messianic Age, from the Garden of Eden to the final redemption from Exile. Like the Midrash, the Targum sees the Canticle as mapping out the history of Israel from Egyptian slavery until the nation's final messianic redemption. But it does this in a very different way: not by a multi-tiered interpretation of every verse as in the Midrash, but through a linear reading of the Canticle.

6.5.3 *Exodus and Mount Sinai*

Following the prologue, the first scene of the Targum (1:2–3:6) is set at the time of the Exodus, described in three accounts. Each one "backtracks" from the preceding one, opening with an earlier scene in Israel's story: The first begins at Mount Sinai; the second, at the Red Sea; and the third, in Egypt at the time of the Passover. In all three accounts, God declares His love for His bride by means of the Torah,[122] and He promises that His abiding presence will remain with her in the Tabernacle as they set out on their wanderings towards the Promised Land.

The first account of the Exodus opens with the longing words of the Shulamite imploring the beloved: "*Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth*" (1:2). For the targumist, the kisses are the words of the Torah which

121 *Mekh Shirata* 1 (Laut. II:2–7); *Mekh de-RaShBY* (Ep./Mel. 71–72). A similar list of seven songs in Origen's *Commentary on the Canticles* indicates that the midrash already existed in the second century and Origen adapted it for his purposes. Cf. Alexander, *The Targum of Canticles*, 206–209.

122 *PRK* 19.4 tells us about an early tradition attributed to R. Yohanan, which states that the Torah was in fact Israel's *ketubah* or writ of dowry and marriage.

God lovingly spoke to Israel, and the young maidens who love Him in return (1:3) are the righteous Israelites who follow the path of God's goodness that was revealed on the mountain. The divine Lover also expresses His love by actively guiding, protecting and providing for His bride: The Song's king who brings the maiden to his chambers (1:4) is the "*Shekhinah* of the Lord of the World" (שכינת מרי עלמא) appearing as pillar of cloud/fire and guiding His bride Israel to the base of Mount Sinai. There, God grants her the *kisses of his mouth*, that is, the Torah which came from the "treasure house of the firmament" (מן בית גנזך דרקיעא). Sinai is thus established as the point of meeting between heaven and earth and the moment when the celestial and impenetrable Law becomes expressed in human language as a gift of divine love. But the sublime quickly makes way for betrayal and disgrace: While *CantR* (1:5 §1) emphasizes the blackness and comeliness of the Shulamite as the sin and good deeds of Israel at all the major stages of her history, the targumist focuses on the most infamous of these moments: Israel's "blackness" is the people's worship of the golden calf,[123] and her "comeliness" is their repentance, when "the splendor of their faces' glory increased like the angels." They were forgiven on account of the curtains of the Tabernacle (the "*curtains of Solomon*") which caused the presence of the *Shekhinah* to dwell among them.

The Targum's second account of the Exodus begins with Cant 1:9 and the Israelites leaving Egypt. The Shulamite who is *like a mare among Pharaoh's chariots* alludes to the Egyptian chariots that pursued the Israelites towards the Red Sea.[124] As they go out into the wilderness, the Shulamite's cheeks, *lovely with ornaments*, are a figure of the Torah's precepts that will bridle the jaws of the Israelites so that they do not stray from the right path, and her neck adorned with strings of jewels (חֲרוּזִים) represents the yoke of God's commands on Israel's neck. The Shulamite's *circlets of gold* are the tablets of stone, "hewn from the sapphire of [God's] glorious throne, bright as pure gold," and her *studs of silver* are the Ten Commandments (1:11), "refined more than silver."[125] For the targumist, *the king at his banqueting table* (Cant 1:12) is Moses, the mediator between the God and His bride who went up to the firmament (רקיעא) to get the heavenly tablets of the Law. This interpretation of Moses as king follows the minority view represented by R. Berekiah in the Midrash, in contrast to the majority view which more conventionally identifies the king with God. The king's feast on Mount Sinai may also allude to the covenantal meal that

123 The sages considered the transgression of the golden calf to be as odious as "a bride playing the harlot while still under the bridal canopy." Cf. above, p. 339 n. 114.

124 Cf. *Mekh Beshallah* 7 (Laut. 1:247); *ARN-A* 27; *CantR* 1:9 §4–5.

125 Cf. *CantR* 1:11 §1.

Moses, Aaron, Nadab, Abihu and the seventy elders ate when they saw God (Exod 24:9–11), and He solemnly sealed His covenant with Israel. The Targum follows R. Meir's negative view (cf. *CantR* 1:12) holding that the smell of nard symbolizes the bad odor of the idolatry of the golden calf that took place in the Israelite camp below while the covenantal ceremony and meal were being celebrated on the mount above.[126]

TgCant 2:2–3 reinforces the Sinaitic setting of the Song: Israel is the Canticle's *lily among the thorns*, and God is *like an apple tree among the trees of the woods* who is "praised among the angels when He revealed himself on Mount Sinai" and gave the Torah to His people.[127] Following the Midrash (*CantR* 2:4 §1), the Targum interprets the king's banqueting table or "*house of wine*" (Cant 2:4) as the house of study at Sinai, and "*his banner over me*" are the commandments received with love. Both wine and Torah are thus seen as generous expressions of divine love that bring joy to the one who receives them (cf. Prov 9:5). Also at variance with the Midrash are the two hands of the beloved (2:6), which for the targumist are not the tablets of the Law but rather four clouds of glory that surround and protect the Israelites in the wilderness.

The third account of the Exodus begins in verse 2:8, where the "*voice of the beloved*" is the Glory of the Lord revealed to Moses "on" Mount Horeb (but the context indicates that this in fact refers to the episode of the burning bush), sending him back to Egypt to deliver Israel. God "skipped" to the appointed end of the time of Egyptian slavery because of the merits of the patriarchs and matriarchs. In the next verse (2:9), the beloved is the same Glory revealed on the night of Passover who, when *standing behind the wall* and *looking through the lattice*, saw the blood of the Passover sacrifice and of the circumcision which protected Israel from the destroying angel and initiated their redemption.[128] In *TgCant* 2:10–11, the beloved's call to his fair one to "*rise up*" and "*come away*" is God calling Israel to leave Egyptian slavery – the Song's winter now coming to an end (cf. *CantR* 2:11 §1). The *springtime buds appearing on the earth* (2:12) are the miracles performed by Moses and Aaron in Egypt, the *time for pruning the vines* is the time for the slaying of the firstborn sons, and the *voice of*

126 Cf. *CantR* 1:12 §§1–2; also *Mekh BaHodesh* 3 (Laut. II:217).

127 Cf. *Mekh de-RaShBY* 29:1 (Nelson 128); *Sifre Deut* 355 (Hammer 375); *CantR* 2:3 §1–3.

128 These ideas are similar to those in *Mekh* and *CantR* with some differences: we do not hear of the haste of the *Shekhinah* or of God skipping over the Egyptian houses in *TgCant*; neither do we find the Midrash's view that God skipped through all the great moments from the Exodus until the final redemption, since this would stray from the Targum's linear historical narrative, exclusively situated at the time of the Exodus for the first two chapters of the Song. Cf. *Mekh Pisḥa* 7 (Laut. I:52, 57); *CantR* (2:9 §1).

singing is the voice of the Holy Spirit of redemption. The Targum continues to stick closely to the Exodus narrative rather than jumping through Israel's history like the Midrash (*CantR* 2:13). As in the Mekhiltot, the "*dove in the clefts of the rock*" (2:14) symbolizes Israel trapped between a hawk and a snake (the Egyptians and the Red Sea); her "sweet voice" is her prayers, and her "lovely face" her good deeds.[129] In the next verse (2:15), the Targum diverges from the earlier midrashim, associating the Song's "*foxes*" not with the Egyptians but rather with wicked Amalek waging war against Israel.[130]

6.5.4 *Tabernacle and Temple*

6.5.4.1 The Tabernacle

For the targumist, the Tabernacle and Temple are the place of the nuptial union between God and Israel throughout the nation's history. The Tabernacle – built, consecrated and set in operation at the foot of Horeb – extends Sinai into time, assuring the Israelites of the continued presence of the *Shekhinah* among them after they leave the Holy Mount behind them. The Tabernacle and its sacrificial worship in the midst of the Israelite camp have atoning power: the curtains of the Tabernacle (= the Canticle's "*curtains of Solomon*") atone for Israel's sin of worshiping the golden calf, and the Tabernacle provides a place for the *Shekhinah* to dwell among them.[131] In the second account of the Exodus, the construction of the Tabernacle and Ark and the offering of sacrifices are also a key to obtain atonement for the sin of the calf (1:14). Moreover, the Shulamite's designation of her beloved as "*a cluster of henna blooms in the vineyards of Ein Gedi*" points to the grape clusters that the sons of Aaron picked from the vineyards of Ein Gedi, providing the wine libations that accompanied the atoning sacrifices.

In the third account of the Exodus, the Shulamite lying in bed at night and seeking the one she loves (3:1) represents Israel left in darkness after the calf incident: As a consequence, the clouds of glory/holy *Shekhinah* departed from them and the "crown of holiness" that had been given to them at Sinai was removed.[132] The woman going into the city to look for her lover (3:2) refers to

129 Cf. *Mekh Beshallah* 3, (1:211) above, p. 300. Here too the Targumist's linear view contrasts with the Midrash's multi-layered interpretation associating the dove with Israel at the Sea, at Mount Sinai, in the Tent of Meeting, and in the Temple (*CantR* 2:14 §§2–4, 6).

130 *Mekh Shirata* 6 (Laut. 11:50); *Mekh de-RaShBY* 32:2 (Nelson 141); *CantR* 2:15 §1.

131 The curtains may also allude to the "curtains" of the heavens, which are at times said to be spread out like a curtain; cf. Job 37:18; Isa 42:5; 44:24; *CantR* 1:5 §1.

132 *CantR* 4:12 §2 also associates Israel's "crown" with the *Shekhinah*, by identifying the crowning of Ezekiel's maiden (Ezek 16:12) as the crowning of Israel at Sinai. Cf. above, p. 337.

the Israelites going to the first Tent of Meeting built by Moses (cf. Exod 33:7–11) to seek instruction from YHWH and the *Shekhinah*. When the Shulamite finally finds her man and brings him into the house of her mother (3:4), this is interpreted as the Shekhinah entering and dwelling into the Tabernacle (cf. Exod 40:33–34). The depiction of the Tabernacle as the place where the Shulamite brings her lover means that it is a marriage chamber as much as a place of worship where sacrifices are offered to God and where the Torah is studied.[133] The Tabernacle is thus seen not only as the extension of Sinai into time, but also as the wedding chamber of God and Israel where they continue to consummate the marriage they previously sealed at Sinai.

6.5.4.2 The First Temple

The Targum attributes a much greater importance to the Jerusalem Temple than to its humble precedessor. The Temple is anticipated in the section on the Exodus as the Canticle's "*shepherds' tent*" (1:8) built by David and Solomon, the shepherds of Israel. As successor of the Tent of Meeting, the Temple was believed to be the direct link to Sinai and home of the divine *Shekhinah* for the generations of Israelites who lived after its construction and dedication. In the second account of the Exodus, the Targum identifies the lovers' green/leafy couch (עַרְשֵׂנוּ רַעֲנָנָה) with the Temple (1:16), home of the *Shekhinah* and source of great fruitfulness deriving from Israel's union with Her (cf. *CantR* 1:16 §2–3): The "green couch" is compared to a fruitful marriage bed out of which springs an abundance of new life, as long as the *Shekhinah* dwells upon it:

> You cause love to dwell in our bed and many children to dwell on the earth, and we increase and multiply like a tree planted by a spring of water, whose foliage is beautiful and whose fruit is plentiful! (cf. Gen 1:28; Ps 1:3; Jer 17:8).

The "houses" of the two lovers, made with beams of cedar and rafters of cypress (1:17) also refer to the Temple. Since the word "houses" is in the plural, they refer to two Temples – Solomon's, and the future Temple of the Messiah, whose beams will be from the cedars of the Garden of Eden, and whose pillars will be from fir, juniper, and cypress.

The entire section of the Targum from 3:7 to 5:1 focuses on Solomon's Temple, pictured as Solomon's bed (3:7) (מִטָּתוֹ) and palanquin (אַפִּרְיוֹן), and built from the wood of Lebanon (3:9). Following an ancient tradition going back to Ben

133 *Mekh Shirata* 3 and *Mekh de-RaShBY* 24:1 also interpret the "chamber of her who conceived me" as the Temple – the Tabernacle's successor. Cf. above, p. 302.

Sira, Lebanon is used as a symbolic name for the Temple, which was built with cedar from Lebanon (1 Kgs 5:6–36) and overlaid with pure gold (cf. 1 Kgs 6:21; *TgCant* 3:9). As in *CantR*, the description of the parts of the palanquin in Cant 3:10 becomes a description of the most important cultic items of the sanctuary: The palanquin's pillars represent the Ark of the Covenant, known as "the pillar of the world." The two tablets of the Law are said to be more precious than the palanquin's silver and gold; its purple seat alludes to the blue and purple curtain (*parokhet*) in the sanctuary; and the "inside" of the palanquin, "*paved with love*," refers to the space between the cherubim on the mercy-seat where the *Shekhinah* dwells. The description of these sacred objects and the divine love dwelling between the cherubim is but a preparation for the great day of the Temple's dedication (1 Kgs 8:63–66), which is for the targumist the "*day of* [*Solomon's*] *wedding*" (*TgCant* 3:11) and a sacred marriage associated with the feast of Sukkot.[134]

In *TgCant* 4:1, the exclamation "*behold, you are fair, my love*" (הִנָּךְ יָפָה רַעְיָתִי) is spoken by God, praising the Assembly of Israel and its leaders who became beautiful after Solomon offered a thousand burnt offerings in the Temple (cf. 1 Kgs 8:62; 2 Chr 7:7).[135] The Targum's allegorical description of the Temple service as a romance between lovers highlights the work of the priests and Levites. These are represented as the beloved's white teeth (4:2), and the prayer of the high priest on Yom Kippur is portrayed as the Shulamite's "*lips like a strand of scarlet*" (4:3). The *mountain of myrrh* and *hill of frankincense* (4:6) stand for the glorious *Shekhinah* dwelling in the Temple and the smell of incense and spices that causes demons (= the Canticle's "shadows") to flee.[136] In Cant 4:8, the beloved's invitation to his spouse to come with him *from* Lebanon is read by the targumist as "*to* Lebanon" and interpreted as God inviting Israel, his chaste bride, to enter the Temple (= Lebanon) with Him.[137]

The invitation to enter the Temple is extended again in 4:16, but now it is Israel who invites God to take up residence in the sanctuary: "*Awake, O north*

134 Cf. Alexander, *Targum of Canticles*, 129 and above, p. 295 n. 12 for parallels.

135 Menn notes how the Targum's retelling of Israel's story serves the purpose of describing a way of life capable of sustaining the Jewish people living under the authority of foreign governments. Thus despite the absence of the Temple in Jerusalem at the time of the Targum's composition, "the concept of the Temple nevertheless embodies God's presence among Israel and comes to encompass those aspects of rabbinic life that foster a close relationship between the divinity and the people." ("*Targum of the Song of Songs* and the Dynamics of Historical Allegory," 437).

136 Josephus (*Ant.* 8.2.5 §45–49) lists three remedies against demons: Torah, Shekhinah, and incense.

137 Cf. *Mekh Pisḥa* 14 (Laut. 1:115); *CantR* 4:8 §1.

wind, and come, O south! Blow upon my garden that its spices may flow out. Let my beloved come to his garden and eat its pleasant fruits." The "north" and "south" do not refer to the burnt offerings and peace offerings here as in the earlier midrashim, but rather to the furnishings of the sanctuary: the table of showbread (on the north side of the sanctuary) and the menorah (on the south side). The "blowing upon the garden" alludes to the offering of sacrifices, the beloved's spices are the spice incense rising from the altar (cf. Exod 40:22–27), and the eating of the fruit is God consuming the Temple offerings. The invitation to the beloved to "*come to his garden and eat its pleasant fruits*" is an invitation to God, Israel's beloved, to enter the Temple and favorably receive the sacrifices of His people.[138]

One of the richest expositions on the Temple is seen in Cant 5:1.[139] For the targumist, the lover entering his "garden" is God (or the *Shekhinah*) entering the Temple that Israel, his sister/chaste bride, has built for Him (cf. 1 Kgs 8:10–13). There He receives the people's incense of spices ("*my myrrh with my spice*"), consumed burnt offerings and holy sacrifices ("*my honeycomb with my honey*") (cf. 2 Chr 7:1), and libations of red and white wine ("*my wine with my milk*") (cf. *CantR* 5:1 §1). The invitation to His friends to eat and drink is an invitation to the priests to come and eat the offerings (cf. Exod 29:32; Lev 8:31–32). God's communion with Israel is thus depicted under the image of a cultic banquet in the Temple.[140]

6.5.4.3 The Second Temple

Following a schematic description of the Babylonian Exile built upon Cant 5:2–6:1, the Targum dedicates Cant 6:2–7:10 to the Second Temple, portrayed with the same imagery as the First. It is introduced as the beloved's "*gardens*" in 6:2, and his "*beds of spices*" are the sacrifices and spice incense favorably received by God. The Shulamite's total surrender to her man ("*I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine*") is an expression of Israel's worship of the Lord who "*feeds his flock among the lilies*" (6:3) – again interpreted as a cultic nuptial feast where

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138 Cf. also *GenR* 22:5; 34:9; *LevR* 9:6; *CantR* 1:2a §1.

139 "בָּאתִי לְגִנִּי אֲחֹתִי כַלָּה אָרִיתִי מוֹרִי עִם־בָּשְׂמִי אָכַלְתִּי יַעְרִי עִם־דְּבְשִׁי שָׁתִיתִי יֵינִי עִם־חֲלָבִי אִכְלוּ רֵעִים שְׁתוּ וְשִׁכְרוּ דּוֹדִים"

140 We recall that the Midrash connects this verse with the covenantal meal that was eaten on Mount Sinai by Moses, Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu (Exod 24:9–11; *CantR* 5:1 §1); this nuptial feasting in the sanctuary may also well be related to the messianic banquet of *TgCant* 8:2 (see below). On the parallels, similarities and differences between *TgCant* 5:1 and *CantR* 5:1, cf. Alexander, "Tradition and Originality in the Targum of the Song of Songs," 322–24.

God/the *Shekhinah* feeds His people with delicacies in the garden/Temple. As in the First Temple, the beloved's "*white teeth*" represent the priests and Levites bringing offerings to the Lord (6:6). The Shulamite, *lovely as Jerusalem* (6:4), is equated with the beauty of the Second Temple, which is also the "*garden of nuts*" inhabited by the *Shekhinah* in 6:11. This increasing recurrence of "garden" imagery associated with the Temple now prompts us to return back in time to explore the origin of the divine-human romance in the Garden of Eden.

6.5.5 *Garden of Eden*

The targumist's narrative of Israel's history generally moves schematically and linearly from the Exodus to the Messianic age. Yet he also introduces flashbacks to the original home of mankind, associating the nuptial union between God and Israel with the Garden of Eden. Eden is mentioned several times in the Targum as the idyllic prototype for the love between God and Israel. This is not a difficult task given the abundance of "garden" imagery in the Canticle, which the targumist associates with Eden/Paradise, the Temple, and the Sanhedrin/house of study, while weaving additional threads between these themes.

Several of these associations appear in the Targum's second account of the Exodus. We have mentioned how the lovers' leafy couch in Cant 1:16 is compared to a fruitful marriage bed that causes the sons and daughters of Israel to "*increase and multiply*" like a flourishing tree planted by a spring of water. This covenantal language of procreation borrowed from the Eden narrative (Gen 1:28) and the mention of Eden, Sinai, the Temple, and the days of the Messiah point to a close connection between the couch and these times/places. *TgCant* 1:17 tells us that the beams of the future Messianic Temple will be made of cedars from the Garden of Eden, in line with traditions associating cedar with the Temple.[141] Moreover, the bride's identity as the "*rose of the Sharon and lily of the valleys*" (Cant 2:1) is rendered as the Assembly of Israel joyfully proclaiming that the presence of the Shekhinah makes her "like the narcissus fresh from the Garden of Eden," and her actions "beautiful like the rose in the valley of Pleasure/Garden of Eden (גינתא דעדן)."[142] At the same time, the

141 According to *GenR* 15.1 (on Gen 2:8) cedars were among the trees of Eden and were created for the sake of the Temple, probably relying on Ezekiel's tradition of cypress, teak and cedars in the Garden of Eden (Ezek 31:8–9). They are also associated with the cedars of Isaiah's messianic age (Isa 41:19).

142 In *CantR* 2:1 §1–2, Israel as the "rose of Sharon" is situated in Egypt, at the Sea, at Sinai and in the messianic age, but not in the Garden of Eden. Cf. above, p. 332.

fruit of the Garden is located at Sinai: The beloved as "*apple tree*" (Tg: אתרוגא/ citron) is praised among trees, just as the Master of the World is praised among the angels when He revealed Himself at Sinai. His "*shadow*" is the shadow of the Shekhinah, and his fruit sweet to his bride's palate stands for the commandments of Torah, like spice to Israel's palate (2:3).[143] This verse also has an eschatological orientation: Israel recalls that a reward for observing the commandments is stored up for her in the world to come. Then, after the mention of the "*house of wine*" (the house of study at Sinai where the wine is the Torah, 2:4), the words of Torah are associated with the apples of the Garden of Eden (*TgCant* 2:5).

Throughout the Targum, the importance of the Torah is emphasized as another means of actualizing Sinai: since the Law was given at Sinai – the place of the revelation of the *Shekhinah* – studying the Torah ushers in Her presence in a similar way. Especially because the Temple service had ceased at the time of the Targum's composition, Torah study is seen as a substitute almost placed on par with it. Thus the beloved's *kisses of his mouth* (1:2) are the words of the Torah, "*better than wine*," that God spoke to Israel.[144] In identifying the words of Torah with the apples of the Garden of Eden, *TgCant* 2:5 views the study of Torah not only as a substitute for Temple worship and the reactualization of Sinai, but also as the way to return to the lost paradise[145] (as well as a key to usher in the final messianic redemption; cf. *TgCant* 7:14). Finally, the Torah also plays a cosmic role: the world is based on its words, and like the Temple service, it sustains all creation (2:5).[146] Thus the lush, intimate setting of the garden and its feast of delights for the Shulamite and her lover in *TgCant* 1:16–2:5 represents the marriage between God and Israel situated in Eden, at Sinai, in the Temple, and at the eschaton.

TgCant 4:12–16, situated in the period of the First Temple, is also rich in Edenic allusions. In v. 4:12, the *locked garden* represents the married women of Israel, while the *spring shut up* depicts the virgins who are locked/sealed like the

143 On the sweetness of Torah cf. Ps 19:11; 119:103; Ezek 3:1.

144 Cf. *Sifre Deut* 48; *CantR* 1:2a §2; 1:2b §3 (above, p. 306 and p. 330 n. 96).

145 *Pirkei Avot* 3:7 states that the *Shekhinah* resides with those who study Torah, which is identified with Wisdom and thus called "a Tree of Life to those who take hold of it" (cf. *m. Avot* 6:7; Prov 3:18). The Talmud also associates the word of God with the Edenic bed of spices of the beloved's cheeks that fills the world: "What is meant by, His cheeks are as a bed of spices [Cant 5:13]? With every single word that went forth from the mouth of the Holy One, blessed be He, the whole world was filled with spices" (*b. Shabb.* 88b).

146 These interconnections are reminiscent of *GenR*'s (1:4) enumeration of the pre-existent things that preceded the creation of the world, including the Torah, the Throne of Glory, Israel, the Temple, and the name of the Messiah.

Garden of Eden from which humanity was excluded.[147] The Canticle's spring is associated with the Edenic spring of living water which, according to *TgCant*, "issued from beneath the Tree." The Canticle's locked garden and sealed fountain – alluding to the faithful love between bridegroom and bride that excludes all potential rivals – become an image of the chastity of Israel's women, reminiscent of the Edenic paradise which excluded all evil. Cant 4:13–14 speaks of an "*orchard/paradise* (פַּרְדֵּס) *of pomegranates with pleasant fruits, fragrant henna with spikenard, spikenard and saffron, calamus and cinnamon, with all trees of frankincense, myrrh and aloes, with all the chief spices*." For the targumist, these are the "spices of the Garden of Eden"[148] and also the spices used to make the anointing oil in the Temple (cf. Exod 30:23–25). Then, borrowing imagery reminiscent of Ezekiel 47, the "*fountain of gardens, a well of living waters, and streams from Lebanon*" (Cant 4:15) are rendered as the waters of Shiloah (cf. Isa 8:6) irrigating the land of Israel for the sake of those immersed with the study of Torah,[149] and by merit of the Sukkot water libations in the Temple.[150] We have seen how the wind blowing upon the bride's garden so that "*its spices may flow out*" and the invitation that her beloved "*come to his garden and eat its pleasant fruits*" refer to the sacrifices and incense offerings, and to Israel inviting God to take up residence in the Temple (4:16). When read in context with vv. 12–13, the association of the Garden with the Temple suggests another connection (geographical, symbolic, or both) between the Temple and Paradise. The beloved's entrance into "*his garden*" (his spouse) (5:1) not only refers to God entering His bridal chamber (= the Temple, cf. *CantR* 5:1 §1) to consume the sacrifices and receive the incense; it also alludes to rediscovering the delights of the Garden of Eden. We will see below (*TgCant* 8:2) another connection between Eden and the sumptuous eschatological feast shared by the *Shekhinah* and Israel in the Messianic Temple.

Similarly, *TgCant* 6:2–3 identifies the Second Temple as the beloved's "*gardens*" where the "*beds of spices*" represent the rising odor of the sacrifices and spice incense. Another mention of a covenantal, nuptial meal follows: the *Shekhinah* dwells within Israel and feeds her with "delicacies." The Second

147 Cf. *Mekh Pisḥa* 5 (Laut. 1:35); *LevR* 32:5; *PRK* 11:6 and above, p. 298 n. 25.

148 Cf. 1 Enoch 30, 32; Apoc. Mos. 29:3–6, where Adam takes the ingredients of the Temple incense from Paradise.

149 The imagery of Torah as a well of living waters is well known: cf. Isa 55:1; Jer 2:13; *GenR* 41:9; 66:1; 69:5; 97:3; ARN-A 41. ARN-A 33 identifies the "well of living waters" of Cant 4:15 with fresh water that came forth from the salty waters as the Israelites crossed the Red Sea.

150 Cf. *m. Sukkah* 4:9. Again, the targumist translates here the Canticle's "*Lebanon*" to mean the Jerusalem Temple.

Temple's identification with the Song's "*garden of nuts*" (6:11) is probably another allusion to Eden, and the mixed wine in the beloved's cup (7:3) signifies the words of Torah, compared to the water of the river that emerged from Eden (cf. Sir. 24:23–27).

The Song's last mention of Eden is found in the section of the Targum focusing on the messianic redemption and eschatological Temple. In Cant 8:2, the Shulamite pledges to bring her lover into "*the house of my mother, she who used to instruct me*" and cause him to "*drink of spiced wine, of the juice of my pomegranate*." According to the Targum, this means that Israel will lead the Messiah-King into the Temple at the end of days, where he will teach her to walk in His ways. Together they will partake of the "Feast of Leviathan," which, according to Talmudic tradition, refers to the Messianic feast where the righteous will eat the flesh of the giant leviathan fish.[151] The spiced wine is the wine of the messianic banquet, preserved since the day the world was created "from pomegranates and fruits prepared for the righteous in the Garden of Eden."[152] Recalling that "*the house of my mother*" previously referred to the desert Tabernacle (3:4), this verse therefore encompasses in a nutshell the history of the world, from the primordial Garden of Eden via the Exodus to the Messianic Temple and eschatological banquet.

6.5.6 *Eschatological Messianic Age*

The historical narrative of the Targum is geared towards the hope of redemption and expectation of the Messiah(s) who will rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem at the end of Israel's history. This eschatological hope, mentioned in passing throughout the text, becomes the main focus of attention from 7:11 to the end, when the King Messiah ushers in the final redemption. The eschatological perspective already appears in the Targum's opening verses: The Torah was given at Mount Sinai so that the righteous may possess "this world and the world to come" (*TgCant* 1:3). The coming of the Messiah is anticipated in the narrative on the Exodus (1:8), associated with the Song's "*shepherd's tent*": as a shepherd leads his flock, the Messiah will lead Israel out of Exile into "their dwelling-place, the Temple that David and Solomon, the shepherds of Israel, will build for them." Moreover, two Messiahs, the son of Ephraim and the son of David (who resemble Moses and Aaron), are symbolized by the two breasts

151 *b. Baba Batra* 74a. Cf. also 1QSa 2:11–12; Matt 26:29; 2 Bar. 29:4; *b. Shabb.* 153a; *b. Hag.* 14b; on the tradition of the flesh of the Leviathan being eaten at the Messianic feast, see Artscroll Sidur, 719, 725.

152 Cf. *b. Ber.* 34b; *b. Sanh. 99a* on the special Messianic drink.

of the Shulamite, almost identically described in both sections on the First and Second Temples (4:5, 7:4).

The entire final section of the Targum (excluding the peroration of 8:11–14) is set in the Messianic Age. It is characterized by the permanent indwelling of the Shekhinah in Israel, described as the lovers' mutual belonging and passion for each other (7:11) after God has ingathered his people from the Exile of Edom and brought them back to Jerusalem, where they offer burnt offerings and holy oblations (7:12–13). In 7:14, God speaks to the Messiah and tells him about the merits of the righteous (= the fragrance of mandrakes) and the studies of the scholars (= choice fruits) which have created the right conditions for redemption. The bride's longing that her beloved be "*like a brother who nursed at my mother's breasts*" (8:1) is an expression of Israel's love for the Messiah; the "mother" is the Torah (cf. *b. Ber.* 57a) nourishing Israel as a mother nourishes her child. Verse 8:2 on the messianic "Feast of Leviathan" links the Garden of Eden and the eschatological Temple. In 8:3, the two hands of the beloved embracing his bride represent the *tefillin* and *mezuzah*, two important symbols of obedience and love for the Torah. They provide the right conditions for redemption and protection from demons, as well as recalling the Passover and the destroyer that slayed the Egyptian firstborns (Exod 12:13, 23).[153]

Cant 8:5 asks: "*Who is this* [*woman*] *coming up from the wilderness, leaning upon her beloved?*" and she declares to him: "*I awakened you under the apple tree. There your mother brought you forth . . .*" The Targum interprets this as the return from exile and resurrection of the dead, when the inhabitants of the earth will ask:

> What was the merit of this people that have come up from the earth, myriads upon myriads, as on the day when they came up out of the wilderness into the land of Israel, and who delight themselves with the love of their Lord as on the day when they appeared beneath Mount Sinai to receive the Law?

The comparison of the Messianic ingathering of the exiles and final resurrection with the Exodus from Egypt is known from the prophets (cf. Jer 23:7–8; Isa 52:12). The beloved's location *under the apple tree* signifies the place "beneath" Mount Sinai where Israel received the Torah.[154] This confirms the double identification of the apple tree with Eden and Sinai seen above

153 Cf. *CantR* 2:6 §1.

154 On the tradition of the Israelites standing "under" Sinai, cf. *Mekh BaHodesh* 3; *CantR* 8:5 §1; *b. Shabb.* 88a; *b. Avodah Zarah* 2b; Ginzberg, *Legends* VI:36, n. 202.

(cf. *TgCant* 2:3, 5; *CantR* 8:5 §1). At the same time, the return from exile is a birthing process whereby "Zion, mother of Israel, will bear her children and Jerusalem will receive her captive children." The ingathering of the exiles in the Messianic Age and the final resurrection of the dead are therefore related to the Garden of Eden, the Exodus from Egypt, the revelation at Sinai, and to Zion/Jerusalem travailing and giving birth – a metaphor no doubt inspired by Isaiah's eschatological prophecy of Zion's "birth pangs of redemption" (cf. Isa 54:1).

The language of love in Cant 8:6 is Israel's plea to God that they may become as the seal of a ring on His heart and arm, so that they may never again be exiled thanks to His love that is "*strong as death*." God responds favorably to their request, for just as "*many waters cannot quench love*," so even if all the nations would gather against Israel they could not quench God's love for His people (8:7), who will find mercy in His eyes through the words of Torah (8:10). A final reference to the bride sitting in "*the gardens*" (Cant 8:13) represents the Assembly of Israel sitting in the house of study and learning the words of the Law. Having taken his readers on the long journey across salvation history from Eden to the eschaton, the targumist pragmatically reminds them that the study of the Torah is *the* way for Jews to bring the exile to an end. In this way, they can rediscover the delights of Eden, renew and reactualize the Sinai covenant, commune with the *Shekhinah* in the Temple, and usher in the great marriage between God and His people in the eschaton. In the last verse, spoken from the perspective of the Exile, the elders of the Assembly of Israel call upon God to flee from the polluted world and let His *Shekhinah* dwell in heaven above. They ask Him to look upon Israel's pain and affliction until the final redemption when He will bring them to the "*mountains of spices*" – the mountains of (the heavenly?) Jerusalem – where priests will burn the incense of spices as an eternal offering to Him.

6.5.7 *Summary: The Targum on Canticles*

The Targum's masterful historical allegory of the Canticle turns the lovers' passionate dialogue into the story of the romance between God and Israel through its most significant peaks and valleys. The idealized prototype of the divine-human love is the long lost Garden of Eden, with its arousing scents of rich spices and sweet savors of abundant fruit. What humanity lost when Adam and Eve were expelled from Eden, Israel regained at Mount Sinai when God entered a nuptial covenant with His newly adopted people and bestowed on them the Torah as guarantee of His enduring faithfulness. The valley of tears, however, remains present throughout the nation's vicissitudes. If humanity's exile from Eden is only implicit in the Targum as the faint remembrance of the lost idyllic garden of love, Israel's long exile through history is real, beginning with

the 40 years of wandering in the wilderness. During this time, the Tabernacle remains the commemoration and actualization of Sinai, and the sign of the *Shekhinah*'s loving presence among God's people until their entrance into the Promised Land. The building of Solomon's Temple on Mt. Zion signifies not only the end of their wanderings and the establishment of a permanent connection with the Sinai covenant. It also signifies the enduring presence of the Garden of Eden in the midst of Israel, through the nuptial chamber in which God continues to be lovingly joined with His people. Even when the Temple is tragically destroyed, all is not lost: the Torah remains Israel's connection with the divine Lover, and its study ushers in the presence of the *Shekhinah* in a way comparable to Her presence at Sinai and in the Temple. When the Jews return to Jerusalem and rebuild the Temple, the nation experiences a new honeymoon with the *Shekhinah* under the Hasmoneans, but it suddenly comes to an end with the exile of Edom. It is from the perspective of this exile that the Targum is written, longingly recalling the delights of Eden, the unforgettable betrothal ceremony at Sinai, the intimacy of the Temple's bridal chamber, and forcefully reminding its Jewish readers that the Torah remains their only link with the glorious moments of the past. The study of the sacred books is the activity that sustains the enduring love between the divine Bridegroom and His human bride, until it becomes again fully manifest in the great nuptial feast expected in the eschatological Temple of the Messianic Age.

CHAPTER 7

From Texts to Theology: Thematic Analysis

7.1 Foundational Concepts and Golden Threads

Having completed our textual study, I now propose a more systematic theological reflection on the four "moments" believed by early Jews and Christians to be the locus of the marriage between God and His people. The goal of this final chapter is to better understand the theological basis of the interrelationship between these moments and how they developed over time. As mentioned in the introduction, I now adopt a synthetic and diachronic approach, looking at the development of these motifs in a wide range of sources. This chapter is more than a summary of the materials covered so far; it is also a thematic synthesis that seeks to grasp the inner dynamics of salvation history and its relationship with nuptial imagery in the ancient Jewish and Christian imagination. I will begin with a consideration of two foundational concepts that link our four moments with nuptial imagery and with each other (7.1):[1] These are the idea of *kedushah*, touching upon sacred time (the Sabbath) and sacred space (the sanctuary) (7.1.1), and the *divine Presence* that inhabits the sacred realms (7.1.2). Second, I will reflect on the interconnection of our four moments in *Jewish* theology as it developed from the prophets to Wisdom, Second Temple, and rabbinic literature (7.2). This section, by far the longest of the chapter, will aim at sketching a comprehensive portrait of the Jewish thought in which New Testament nuptial symbolism was born. Third, I will summarize and briefly reflect on the early *Christian* reinterpretation of the same motifs in the NT and Pseudepigrapha (7.3). Fourth, I will draw some final conclusions and relate them to the ongoing history of Christian hermeneutics (7.4).

7.1.1 Kedushah, *Covenant, Sacred Time and Sacred Space*

The first foundational thread behind the mystical union of God and his bride is related to the *time* and *place* where it was thought to occur. If the *sacred place* where the covenant was renewed for successive generations of Israelites was the *Temple*, the *sacred time* when the marriage was consummated was

1 We have already noted above some connecting threads between Eden, Sinai, Temple and eschaton in the covenantal feast (p. 73f.), the "holy mountain of the Lord" and its streams of living water (p. 80f.), and the symbolism of wine (p. 138f.).

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the *Sabbath*. These two central institutions of ancient Israel were rooted in the concept of *kedushah* (קדוּשָׁה). Berman, among others, notes how the English words *holy* or *sacred* do not accurately convey the biblical meaning of the word. *Kedushah* most profoundly describes God's own essence: He is קדוש in the sense that he is set apart and transcendent from this world.[2] When applied to things or people, the word *kedushah* does not primarily refer to a state of moral perfection but rather to consecration for a special purpose. And so Israel's call to be a "holy people" (גוֹי קָדוֹשׁ)[3] means that they are dedicated to God, segregated and set apart for his service through formal, legal restrictions: "And you shall be holy to Me, for I the LORD am holy, and have separated you from the peoples, that you should be Mine."[4]

The *kedushah* of Israel stems from the fact that it has entered into a national covenant with God, becoming "a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (cf. Exod 19:6). The covenant is based on mutual love, and the commandments set the people apart from the nations of the world.[5] God thus imparts *kedushah* on His people by setting them apart for a special purpose. In this light, it is interesting to note that the root ק.ד.ש is also used within a sexual/nuptial context: *kedeshah* (קְדֵשָׁה) is one of the words used in the Bible to describe a prostitute ("dedicated" to the act of harlotry),[6] and later, in the Mishnah, *kidushin* (קידושין) describes the act of the bridegroom sanctifying his bride to himself in the act of marriage.[7] Given the etymological connection between *kedushah* and *kidushin*, signifying the act of setting apart and consecrating a person by a solemn oath for the purpose of establishing an enduring covenantal bond between the two parties, one sees how the idea of choosing Israel and imparting holiness to her developed into the belief that God betrothed the community of Israel to Himself at Sinai. The close relation between

2 Exod 15:11; Amos 4:2; cf. Berman, *The Temple*, 1–19.

3 Cf. Exod 19:6; 22:30; 30:32; 30:37; Lev 11:43–45; 19:2; 20:26; 21:7–8; Num 15:39–40; Deut 7:3–6; 14:1–2, 21; 23:15.

4 Lev 20:26; cf. Berman, *The Temple*, 6.

5 "For you are a holy people (עם קדוש) to the LORD your God . . . The LORD did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any other people, for you were the least of all peoples; but *because the LORD loves you*, and because He would keep the oath which He swore to your fathers . . . Therefore know that the LORD your God . . . keeps covenant and mercy for a thousand generations *with those who love Him* and keep His commandments" (Deut 7:6–9, emphasis added). See also Deut 28:9 and Berman's discussion on *kedushah* and covenant (*The Temple*, 7–10).

6 Cf. Gen 38:21–22; Deut 23:17; Hos 4:14. cf. Berman, *The Temple*, 5–6.

7 Through the act of betrothal the husband "prohibits her to the whole world as a sacred object" (Kiddushin 2b).

sanctity and betrothal also explains why the Temple came to be regarded as *the* place where the sacred nuptial union between God and Israel was consummated, and why the Sages believed that the Song of Songs was given to Israel at Sinai. We will now examine how the *kedushah* of the Sabbath connects creation, Sinai, the Temple, and the eschaton.

7.1.1.1 *Kedushah*, Sabbath and Creation

How did the Sabbath come to be known as the privileged sacred moment of the nuptial union between God and Israel? The biblical account describes the Sabbath as the pinnacle of *kedushah* in time, not only commemorating the creation of the world but also acting as the sign of the covenant between God and Israel. The Sabbath is thus the temporal counterpart of what the Temple is in space: It is a *sanctuary in time* where Israel meets its Maker, and its holiness harkens back to the seventh day of creation when God "rested" from all his work.[8] This is the only place in Genesis where *kedushah* is mentioned, when "God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it" (וַיְקַדֵּשׁ אֹתוֹ) (Gen 2:3), setting it apart for the special purpose of celebrating his work of creation and "remembering" his covenant with humanity. This inherent holiness explains why some rabbis saw the Sabbath as imbued with nuptial meaning, comparing the world after the six days of creation to a bridal chamber that was still lacking a bride: the Sabbath became this bride who completed the marriage of creation.[9]

7.1.1.2 *Kedushah*, Sabbath and Sinai

In addition to commemorating God's rest following creation, the Sabbath is also a "temporal shrine" and eternal sign bearing witness to His covenant with Israel.[10] In the Pentateuch, the seventh day links creation and the Sinai covenant by revealing in both cases God's *kedushah* (Gen 2:2–3; Exod 31:12–17).[11] The connection is also emphasized in Second Temple Literature: In Jubilees, already at creation God pre-ordained the birth of Israel and established the

8 To the biblical difficulty that God finished his work on the *seventh* day (did He not finish it on the *sixth* day, since he *rested* on the seventh?), the Sages answer that God created "tranquility, ease, peace and quiet" on the seventh day. He "created" the Sabbath itself and its rest from human toil and labor. *GenR* 10:9. Cf. Heschel, *The Sabbath*, 22–23.

9 Cf. *GenR* 10:9.

10 Exod 31:13–17; Isa 56:4–6; Lev 23:2–3; cf. Berman, *The Temple*, 11.

11 Cf. also Exod 24:16, where the cloud covering Sinai for six days, followed by the Lord calling Moses on the seventh day, possibly hints at the six days of creation followed by the Sabbath: "The glory of the LORD settled on Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it six days; and on the seventh day he called to Moses out of the midst of the cloud."

Sabbath as sign of the future covenant with them.[12] For the rabbis, the Sabbath was married in the first place to God, but she was also espoused to Israel. She thus plays a mediating role between her two partners – not unlike Lady Wisdom – in a "love triangle" with God and Israel. The Sages interpret the commandment that Israel sanctify the Sabbath (לְקַדְּשׁוֹ, Exod 20:8) as a commandment to *betroth* her.[13] To them, the word לקדש underlined Israel's destiny to be "the groom of the sacred day;" it was a commandment for them to "espouse the seventh day."[14] As sign of the covenant between God and Israel, the Sabbath thus not only commemorates the seventh day of creation and the giving of the Torah on Mount Sinai; she is also a bride endowed with *kedushah*, calling for the companionship of man and celebrated like a wedding ceremony.

7.1.1.3 *Kedushah*, Sabbath and Temple

What the Sabbath is to time, the Temple is to space. If the Sabbath constituted the privileged *sacred time* for the nuptial union, the sanctuary was the *sacred place* and nuptial chamber of God and Israel. The book of Exodus describes how God established his "meeting place" at Sinai between Him and His people in the Tabernacle (Exod 25:8; 29:43–45), called "tent of meeting" (אהל מועד), "dwelling place" (משכן) or, alternately, the *mikdash* (מקדש) or *kodesh* (קודש) – usually translated "sanctuary." The names used to describe the Tabernacle – and its successor, the Temple (בית המקדש) – reveal it as a "house of holiness," a consecrated, sacred space for divine service, where the divine presence dwells and meets with his covenantal people. The Pentateuch attests to several links between Sabbath and Temple, in addition to their common role as sanctuaries of *kedushah* in time and space: The commandment to keep the Sabbath and abstain from performing any מְלָאכָה on it is emphasized in Exod 31:12–17, right

12 [Upon creating the seventh day, God said:] "Behold, I will separate unto Myself a people from among all the peoples, and these shall keep the Sabbath day, and I will sanctify them unto Myself as My people, and will bless them; as I have sanctified the Sabbath day and do sanctify (it) unto Myself, even so will I bless them, and they shall be My people and I will be their God. And I have chosen the seed of Jacob from amongst all that I have seen, and have written him down as My first-born son, and have sanctified him unto Myself for ever and ever; and I will teach them the Sabbath day, that they may keep Sabbath thereon from all work." (Jub. 2:19–21; cf. also 2:31–32)

13 Cf. *b. Shabbat* 119a; *b. Baba Qama* 32a–b; *GenR* 10:9. *Shabbat* is the bride of Israel in *GenR* 11:8 and God's Queen in *LevR* 27:10. On the Sabbath's role as bride, cf. Heschel, *The Sabbath*, 45–55; Green, "Shekhinah, the Virgin Mary and the Song of Songs," 19; Patai, *The Hebrew Goddess*, 255–276; Pope, *Song of Songs*, 171–179.

14 Heschel, *The Sabbath*, 54.

after the instructions given to Bezalel and Aholiab to do the מְלָאכָה of building the Tabernacle (Exod 31:1–11), and just before God gives Moses the two tablets of the testimony (Exod 31:18).[15] As signs of the covenant and privileged realms of *kedushah*, both Sabbath and Sanctuary are thus to be guarded with the same diligence: "You shall keep My Sabbaths and reverence My Sanctuary: I am the LORD" (Lev 19:30; 26:2).

7.1.1.4 *Kedushah*, Sabbath and World to Come

An old tradition is preserved to this day in the Shabbat prayer at the end of grace after meals: "May the All-merciful let us inherit the day which will be all Sabbath and rest in the life eternal." The idea that the Shabbat is מעין עולם הבא – "something like the world to come" – is quite ancient. In the *Life of Adam and Eve* (51:2) we read that "the seventh day is the sign of the resurrection and the rest of the age to come." The *Mekhilta* on Exod 31:17 adds: "The world to come is characterized by the kind of holiness possessed by the Sabbath in this world . . . The Sabbath possesses a holiness like that of the world to come." A mishnaic tradition attributed to Rabbi Akiva also states that the world to come is "the day which will be all Sabbath in the life eternal."[16] Though the idea of the Sabbath as a foretaste of eternity is post-biblical, the antiquity of these sources gives reason to believe that the concept was known in the first century CE. The *kedushah* of the Sabbath was thus linked to creation/Eden, Sinai, Temple, and eschaton already from this early time.

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15 Recall also the linguistic resemblance between the accounts of the completion of creation and of the Tabernacle – a correlation that seems to represent the Sanctuary as a type of "spiritual completion" of the universe (cf. above, p. 90; Berman, *The Temple*, 13–14). Berman notes other similarities between creation, Sabbath and Sanctuary: (1) the predominance of "seven" in the narrative of the completion of the Temple: it took seven years to complete (1 Kgs 6:35) and was dedicated on the seven-day long Sukkot festival on the seventh month of the year (1 Kgs 8:2); (2) both the creation of the world and of the Tabernacle were done by תְּבוּנָה, חָכְמָה and דַּעַת (Exod 31:3; Prov 3:19–20); (3) like the Sabbath, the Temple is a place of divine *menuchah* (cf. Ps 132:7–8, 13–14; 2 Chr 6:41); (4) both are connected with the opposite concept of *melakhah*: "The covenant at Sinai established God and the Jewish people as partners in the process of creation. The Sabbath – covenantally commemorative time – recalls the creation of the universe through the *melakhah* of God. The Sanctuary – covenantally commemorative space – represents a completion of the process of creation through the *melakhah* of the Jewish people" (Berman, p. 18). This explains why the rabbis determined that the 39 מְלָאכוֹת forbidden on Shabbat are the same מְלָאכוֹת that were performed to build the Sanctuary (cf. *m. Shabbat* 7:2). For a bibliography on the relationship between Sabbath and Sanctuary in the Bible, see Berman, p. 211 n. 15.

16 *m. Tamid 6:7; b. Rosh Hashanah* 31a.

7.1.2 *Divine Presence and Divine Glory*

God's *kedushah* is intrinsically related to another important motif, namely His imminent Presence (known as the *Shekhinah* in post-biblical literature) and the manifestation of His glory (כְּבוֹד ה׳, LXX: ἡ δόξα Κυρίου). The *kedushah* imparted to Israel finds its source in the divine glory and at the same time manifests it to the world. The manifestation of God's Presence undergoes significant development from the Hebrew Bible to later writings, tending to move from a direct, unmediated Presence to an increasingly mediated one:[17] In the Bible, the Presence is often represented as "cloud" or "glory." In Wisdom literature, there is less immediate interaction between God and His people, and the mediating figure of Lady Wisdom (playing the part of God's "wife" and identified with the divine δόξα) represents Him among men. In the NT, Jesus takes on the role of the incarnate divine Presence among God's people. In Targumic and Midrashic literature, the figure of the *Shekhinah* takes over Wisdom's role as mediatrix and divine hypostasis, on the one hand to avoid biblical anthropomorphisms, yet at the same time taking on more tangible and personal attributes.[18] Eventually, the *Shekhinah* takes on a (feminine) identity, distinct from God and increasingly identified with a personified *Knesset Israel*; both inherit the role of God's bride that had been attributed to Israel in the prophets and to Lady Wisdom in wisdom literature. Throughout our sources, the divine Presence and Glory also connects Eden, Sinai, the Temple and the eschaton.

7.1.2.1 *Shekhinah* and Glory in Eden

As the first home of humanity, the Garden of Eden exemplifies the primeval abode of God with man. The anthropomorphic description of God "walking" (מִתְהַלֵּךְ) in the Garden illustrates the unhindered communion between Him and the first couple just before it was broken and they were expelled from the Garden. The tradition of the divine glory radiating from Eden and especially granted to Adam is developed in post-biblical texts. Jubilees 2:32 reveals that at the completion of creation the Creator blessed the Sabbath "which He had created for blessing and holiness and glory above all days." The *Apocalypse of Moses* records that Adam exclaimed to the serpent after he ate from the tree: "Why have you done this to me in that you have deprived me

17 For studies on the Divine Presence and historical development of the *Shekhinah*, cf. above, p. 121 n. 42; Patai, *The Hebrew Goddess*, 96–111; Pope, *Song of Songs*, 158–161.

18 Patai (*The Hebrew Goddess*, 110) writes: "As the distance between God and the Shekhina grew, the latter took on increasingly pronounced physical attributes. The more impossible it became to think of God himself in anthropomorphic terms, the more the Shekhina became humanized."

of the glory with which I was clothed?" (20:2); and to Eve: "O wicked woman! What have I done to you? You have alienated me from the glory of God!" (21:6; cf. 21:2).[19] The same book also testifies to the role of the Garden as seat of the divine Presence: After Adam dies, he returns to Paradise for judgment, and God goes up there "mounted on the chariot of his cherubim" with His throne being "fixed where the Tree of Life was" (22:3–4).[20]

7.1.2.2 *Shekhinah* and Glory at Sinai

God's glory appears in the OT as a visible and powerful manifestation to men, often in the form of a cloud[21] and connected with His Presence in the Tabernacle and Temple. The glory of the Lord had already appeared in the cloud to the Israelites in the Wilderness of Sin (Exod 16:10). But it becomes especially manifest at Mount Sinai, when Moses mediates the covenant and "the glory of the LORD rested on Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it six days," resulting in a sight that was "like a consuming fire on the top of the mountain" (Exod 24:16–17).[22] Later, when God instructs Moses to construct the Tabernacle, He reveals that He will be the source of its sanctity: it "shall be sanctified by My glory" (Exod 29:43). But when Moses daringly asks to see YHWH's glory, he is told that this is impossible in his present mortal state (Exod 33:18–23).[23] It was but a logical step for the sages to expand upon the idea of Sinai as the place where the glory of the *Shekhinah* dwells, and turn it into the place where the Lord receives Israel as a bride, where Israel betrothes the Sabbath, and where the Song of Songs is given to Israel.

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19 The DSS also attest to the "glory of Adam": cf. 1QS 4:23; CD 3:20; 1QH 17:15; Hayward, *The Jewish Temple*, 45.

20 On Adam's loss of the glory of God, cf. also 3 Bar. 4:16; 4 Ezra 7:118–124; 8:50–52; T. Ab. 11:8–9. The *Life of Adam and Eve* (11:3; 12:1; 16:1–4; 17:1) also recounts how the devil lost the divine glory after he rebelled against God. We recall how the idea was adopted and expanded in rabbinic literature with the presence of the *Shekhinah* dwelling in Eden before the fall of Adam and Eve; cf. *PRK* 1 (above, p. 320); *CantR* 5:1 §1 (above, p. 337); *TgCant* (above, p. 350).

21 On the identification of the כָּבוֹד with the cloud (ענן), Patai (*The Hebrew Goddess*, 97) writes: "A careful perusal of the passages referring to the manifestation of God in the sanctuary shows that the nouns 'cloud' and 'glory' are used interchangeably, and that the 'cloud' was undoubtedly regarded as the visible form taken by the 'glory' of Yahweh when He wished to indicate His presence in His earthly abode, the sanctuary."

22 The manifestation of the כְּבוֹד-ה׳ at Sinai is also described in Deut 5:24.

23 We will leave aside the other tradition seen a few verses earlier which states that "the Lord spoke to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend" (33:11).

7.1.2.3 *Shekhinah* and Glory in the Temple (and in the Cosmos)

The same cloud of glory manifest at Sinai also filled the Tabernacle and Temple at the time of their dedication, both times filling the holy place with such thickness that it was not possible to enter, let alone to minister in the sanctuary.[24] Yet if the כָּבוֹד was especially present in the Tabernacle and Temple, it was not limited to these physical structures but also manifest in all of creation: The belief that "all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the LORD" (Num 14:21) is already attested in the Pentateuch, and it is echoed by the seraph when Isaiah is granted an exceptional vision of the glory: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory!" (Isa 6:3).[25] Nevertheless, the immanence of God's glory in creation did not detract from the *Shekhinah's* privileged place of dwelling in the holy sanctuary, nor did it attenuate the tragedy of its departure. Ezekiel's visions provide an elaborate account of the glory's vicissitudes, whose presence in the sanctuary was dependent upon Israel's faithfulness to the covenant. The spectacular vision of the *merkavah* by the river Kevar (Chebar) in Babylon is none other than "the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord" (מַרְאֵה דְּמוּת כְּבוֹד-ה׳)[26] which had left its abode above the cherubim in the sanctuary and gradually departed Jerusalem because of her abominations.[27] The tragedy of the *Shekhinah*'s departure from the Temple and her wandering with Israel in exile – as well as the longing to see this situation resolved – is seen in the prominent place given to this theme in rabbinic literature.

7.1.2.4 Restoration of the Divine Glory at the Eschaton

Despite the destruction of the Temple and Israel's exile, Ezekiel foresaw the return of "the glory of the God of Israel" to the eschatological Temple (Ezek 43:2–5; 44:4). Haggai had similar insights: despite the modest appearance of the Second Temple compared to the First, he prophesied that "the glory of this latter house shall be greater than that of the former" (2:6–9). The universal manifestation of YHWH's כָּבוֹד was also anticipated by prophets and psalmists who echoed Habakkuk's words: "For the earth will be filled with the knowledge

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24 Exod 40:34–35; 1 Kgs 8:10–11; 2 Chr 5:14; 7:1–3. For more manifestations of the כָּבוֹד in the sanctuary, see also Lev 9:6, 23; Num 14:10; 16:19; 16:42; 20:6.

25 Isaiah's vision also highlights the connection between the Lord's קדושה and his כָּבוֹד. The presence of the כְּבוֹד-ה׳ in creation, in the heavens and on earth, is also a recurring theme of the Psalms; cf. Ps 8:1; 19:1; 57:5; 108:5; 113:4.

26 Ezek 1:28; cf. also 3:23; 8:4.

27 Ezek 9:3; 10:3–4, 18–19; 11:22–23.

of the glory of the LORD."[28] The idea of the eschatological restoration of the divine Presence and glory continues in pseudepigraphical writings, where it is often portrayed as a return to Eden: In the *Apocalypse of Moses*, Seth – the son of Adam – is promised that he will eat from the Tree of Life at the end of the times when the *kedushah* of God will be universally restored: "Then will all flesh be raised up from Adam till that great day, as many as will be a holy people. Then will every delight of paradise be given to them and God will be in their midst" (*Apoc. Mos.* 13:2–4). Even Adam is promised a future restoration of the glory he lost: "I will transform you to your former glory and set you on the throne of the one who deceived you" (*Apoc. Mos.* 39:2). The *Testament of Dan* (5:12) likewise announces that "the saints shall rest in Eden, and in the New Jerusalem shall the righteous rejoice, and it shall be unto the glory of God for ever." *2 Baruch* (51:3, 10–11) describes the glory of those who have been justified as being changed "from beauty into loveliness, and from light into the splendor of glory."[29] We have also seen how the Sages expected a restoration of the *Shekhinah* and divine glory in the Messianic age and Temple.

This brief review of two "golden threads" connecting our four "key moments" of the mystical marriage between God and Israel – the קְדוּשָׁה of the Sabbath and the כָּבוֹד of the divine Presence – enables us now to move to a more systematic and theological consideration of these moments in ancient Judaism in light of the texts studied so far.

7.2 Four Key Moments of Salvation History in Ancient Judaism

7.2.1 *Eden as Ideal Prototype of the Mystical Marriage*

As we have seen, most of our texts relate nuptial imagery to the original covenant with creation and its apex – the pristine, Edenic home of Adam and Eve where they are given the first commandment to "be fruitful and multiply" (Gen 1:27) by becoming "one flesh" (Gen 2:24). The marriage between God and His people Israel evokes a return to the origins of mankind and place of perfect harmony and blessing between man and woman flowing from an unhindered communion with God. This idea is already present among the prophets: Hosea compares Israel's transgression of the covenant to Adam's sin, with the future restoration of the marriage depicted in the language of creation and Eden. Jeremiah expresses God's "everlasting love" for Israel as a type of new

28 Hab 2:14. Cf. Isa 4:5; 11:10; 24:23; 40:5; 43:7; 60:1; Ps 84:11; 85:9.

29 Cf. also in T. Levi 18:6–11 how the glory of God will rest upon the eschatological priest who will open the gates of paradise and give to the saints to eat from the tree of life.

creation, where those returning from exile to Zion are like a "well-watered garden;" and Isaiah's promise of Zion's eschatological restoration is also expressed in both nuptial and Edenic terms.

In Wisdom literature, seductive Lady Wisdom who courts the hearts of men was already present at the origin of creation and is associated with the Tree of Life and Garden of Eden. In addition, it seems that the connections between Eden and the Song of Songs may well have been intended by the Song's author, given the close affinities between the gardens in both texts (cf. Cant 4:12–5:1; 6:2): the former paradise was lost through disobedience and sin; in the Canticle it is regained through love. Landy argues that "the Song constitutes an inversion of the Genesis narrative" in which man rediscovers the Paradise lost in Eden.[30] Both gardens are secluded and inaccessible; both relate to a tree and its fruit (Cant 2:3; 8:5); in Genesis, the tree of knowledge and the Tree of Life stand in opposition to each other; in the Song they are reunited. In Genesis, knowledge is death; in the Song, knowledge is life. Genesis presents a world where man was naked and unashamed; the Canticle describes a return to this world.[31] The fountain of living waters of the Song (4:15) recall the rivers of Eden; a multitude of animals are present in both gardens; death is excluded from both places; and the beloved herself becomes the Garden of Eden in the Song of Songs (4:12, 5:1). In short, Gen 2–3 begins with the unity of Adam and Eve and ends in their division and exile, while in the Song, lover and beloved are reunited.[32]

For Philo, the embracing cherubim in the Holy of Holies recall the flaming guardians of the Garden of Eden, symbolizing God's male-female image and the love between Him and Wisdom. They also represent God's love for Israel and the original androgynous union between Adam and Eve in the Garden. Moreover, Wisdom originates in Eden and is associated with the Tree of Knowledge. Those who embrace her, in imitation of the cherubim, are endowed with the divine virtue that signifies a return to the Tree of Life and God's presence.

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30 Landy, *Paradoxes of Paradise*, 183–223. *Ibid.*, "The Song of Songs and the Garden of Eden," 524; cf. also Trible, "Depatriarchalizing in Biblical Interpretation," 42–47.

31 Landy, *Paradoxes of Paradise*, 223.

32 Landy (*Paradoxes of Paradise*, 183) writes: "The detailed correspondence of thematic material is so extensive that the Song constitutes an inversion of the Genesis narrative . . . Both texts find their complement in the other, and, moreover, imply the other. The Genesis myth points outside the garden; the Song goes back to it. Their opposition conceals a hidden identity, for the Song is not merely a commentary on the Garden of Eden, but a reenactment, almost a hallucination of it."

Nuptial references to the Garden of Eden are also abundant in the rabbinic texts. The connection is illustrated by means of creative images such as God blessing the union of Adam and Eve as their *shoshbin*, creation as a cosmic wedding (of the world, of God and the Sabbath, or of the Sabbath and Israel), the exile from Eden as a divorce, and Lady Wisdom's banquet as the creation of the world. Other images include the Torah's identification with the Canticle's lover, with Wisdom, and with the Tree of Life, Israel's desire for redemption – expressed as the Shulamite calling God to draw her into the Garden of Eden, God coming into His "garden" (גַּנִּי) or "bridal chamber" (גִּנּוּנִי) – illustrating the return of the *Shekhinah* on earth since her departure from Eden, and the messianic age depicted as a restoration of the Edenic paradise and return to the Tree of Life.

7.2.2 *Betrothal at the Time of the Exodus and at Sinai*

Och notes the tragic irony of the Garden of Eden: from its original purpose as place of idyllic harmony, blessing and communion with God, it became instead – because of human sin and disobedience – the locus of alienation and curse, and the arena of the two opposing forces that remain continuously at work in human existence. Creation: harmony/order/God-centered/blessing; and decreation: alienation/chaos/man-centered/curse – understood by some rabbis as a kind of divorce.[33] With man's alienation from God – brought about by their sin and expulsion from Eden – came the need for restoration and reconciliation. Redemption, in this sense, is but a re-implementation of creation and restoration of humanity to its rightly intended created order. This helps to explain why writers of sacred literature anchor their nuptial theology in a great redemptive event able to repair man's break from Eden and alienation from God. In this section, we will first review how our sacred authors relate nuptial symbolism to the redemptive motif (7.2.2.1). Second, we will probe into the theological relationship between Eden and the central redemptive event in the Bible – the Exodus and the Sinai covenant (7.2.2.2).

7.2.2.1 Nuptial Symbolism as Redemptive Event

The prophets believed that God betrothed Israel in the desert during the Exodus. For Hosea and Jeremiah, divine love was revealed at the time of the deliverance from Egypt. It is the guarantee and model for the future redemption, portrayed as a new betrothal and "new Exodus" characterized by the joyful voice of the bridegroom and bride. Similar covenantal-nuptial language is found in Ezekiel 16, where the Exodus and Sinai covenant are depicted

33 Cf. *GenR* 20:7 (above, p. 313); Och, "Creation and Redemption: Towards a Theology of Creation," 229.

metaphorically as God's betrothal with the abandoned maiden. Isaiah, more oriented towards the future, envisions the last redemption as both a new Exodus and a marriage.

Although the wisdom writers do not directly situate their nuptial symbolism at the Exodus or Mount Sinai, they do so indirectly by identifying Lady Wisdom with the *Torah* given at Sinai. This connection between Wisdom, Torah and the covenant is sometimes reinforced via the metaphor of the covenantal feast.

The Rabbis clearly viewed the Sinai theophany as the moment of the betrothal between God and Israel, which explains why the school of R. Akiva saw Sinai as the moment when the Song of Songs was given to Israel. The idea of Sinai as betrothal pervades the rabbinic exegesis of the Song, from the Mishnah's interpretation of the "day of the wedding" of Solomon as day of the giving of the Law, the Canticle's lover as God and the Shulamite as Israel at Sinai, the fragrance of her nard as the thunder, lightning and cloud of the theophany, and the Lord coming to Sinai as the "time of love" when the bridegroom comes to meet his bride. This is reinforced by other nuptial associations such as Moses as *shoshbin* and the Torah as *ketubah* (or bride), equated with divine Wisdom, whose commandments are the way for Israel to live out the nuptial covenant they accepted at Sinai.

7.2.2.2 Exodus and Sinai as Renewal of Creation

Why does nuptial symbolism relate to both protology and covenant – to the creation/Eden and Sinai/Exodus motifs? Perhaps this is because of the close relationship between these two moments in biblical and post-biblical literature. The redemptive event at Sinai was considered to be the completion and renewal of creation and the initiation of its repair back to its original state as a corrective to the fall.[34] The connection is well attested in the OT. The author of the Wisdom of Solomon seems to take it for granted as he concludes a long description of the events of the Exodus by stating that in it "the whole creation in its nature was fashioned anew" (Wis 19:6). We have men-

34 As Och states: "At Sinai, the destructive forces of decreation unleashed by man in Eden are neutralized and brought under control by a Divine/human act of restoration and recreation. Eden and Sinai are parametric events which set up a historical continuum on which the drama of creation and decreation is played out" (Och, "Creation and Redemption: Towards a Theology of Creation," 230–31). Och mentions the Flood story and the Abraham cycle as two intermediate acts of re-creation before the culmination of this process at Sinai.

tioned how the *kedushah* of the seventh day of creation and of the Sabbath forms a common thread and meeting point between creation/Eden and Sinai. Deut 4:32 calls the Exodus and Sinai revelation the greatest events since the creation of the world.[35] Jer 31:31–37, which describes in nuptial terms God's covenant with Israel when He took them out of Egypt, compares it with the fixed order of creation, using the language of Genesis 1 (day and night; sun and moon; heaven, earth and sea). Jeremiah also simultaneously praises the Lord for having made the heavens and the earth by his great power and outstretched arm, and for having brought Israel out of Egypt with signs and wonders, with a strong hand and outstretched arm (Jer 32:17–21; cf. Amos 9:5–7). Psalm 136 first praises God for His work of creation (vv. 5–9) and then for the events of the Exodus (vv. 10–21). And Second Isaiah's "new Exodus" motif is typically linked with the elements of nature (earth, sea, rivers, animals, vegetation) associated with the creation.[36] These passages indicate that the biblical authors saw an intrinsic connection between creation and the Exodus as the two greatest events accomplished by YHWH. But on what basis did they see this connection?

Exodus as New Creation

Fretheim argues that the theme of creation is paramount in the Exodus narrative, noting that the language used to describe the multiplication of the Israelites in Exod 1:7 (וּבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל פָּרוּ וַיִּשְׁרְצוּ וַיִּרְבּוּ וַיַּעַצְמוּ בִּמְאֹד מְאֹד וַתִּמָּלֵא הָאָרֶץ אֹתָם) evokes the original commandment to be fruitful and multiply in Gen 1:28 (and 9:1, 7). The forming of Israel is the creation of a people *ex nihilo* – out of the "nothingness" of Egyptian slavery – a "new creation" modeled on the first, cosmic creation, and its historical counterpart and completion. Och calls the birth of Israel in Egypt a "microcosmic fulfillment of God's macrocosmic plan for the world."[37] As new creation, Israel is called to be fruitful and multiply to mediate God's life-giving presence and redemption to the world. But this calling is thwarted by the oppressive measures of Egypt and Pharaoh, which Fretheim views as "fundamentally antilife and anticreation." These are the embodiment of the primeval forces of chaos that threaten "a return of the entire cosmos to

35 "For ask now concerning the days that are past [of the Exodus and Sinai theophany] . . . since the day that God created man on the earth, and ask from one end of heaven to the other, whether any great thing like this has happened, or anything like it has been heard." Cf. also Exod 34:10. Carmichael, *The Story of Creation*, 4–5.

36 Isa 41:17–20; 42:5–17; 43:15–21; 51:10.

37 Och, "Creation and Redemption," 234–35.

its precreation state."[38] The consequence of Pharaoh's corrupt moral order is God's judgment, coming in the form of the devastating plagues unleashed upon Egypt and corresponding to the suffering that was previously inflicted upon the Israelites. They are epitomized by the penultimate plague of darkness – signifying a reversion to the chaos of the pre-creation state, and the death of the first-born as the final and irreversible snuffing out of life.[39] In stark contrast to the "de-creation" of Egypt stand the events of the Exodus and deliverance of Israel, portrayed as reversals of the plagues and as a re-creation ultimately carried out for the sake of the entire world.[40]

Sinai as Completion of the New Creation

The new creation is completed at Mount Sinai with the establishment of God's covenant with Israel based on mutual love, revealing God's כָּבוֹד and endowing Israel with His own קדוּשָׁה. The return of God's sanctified Presence on earth in the midst of His newly created people, reestablishing the relationship that had been broken in Eden, means that redemption is but the restoration and renewal of creation. Sinai is a corrective to the fall and the completion of

38 Fretheim, "The Plagues as Ecological Signs of Historical Disaster," 385; *ibid.*, "The Reclamation of Creation," 357.

39 So Fretheim ("The Plagues," 395): "Pharaoh has been subverting God's creational work, so the consequences are oppressive, pervasive, public, prolonged, depersonalizing, heart-rending, and cosmic because such has been the effect on Egypt's sins upon Israel – indeed, upon the earth."

40 Fretheim, "The Plagues," 392. Examples proposed by Fretheim (395) as to how the events of the Exodus reverse the plagues include: a) the creational language of the Song at the Sea; b) after the first plague the Egyptians "could not drink the water" (Exod 7:24), but when the Israelites "could not drink the (bitter) water" Moses made it sweet (Exod 15:23); c) God destroyed the food by "raining" (מַמְטִיר) hail upon Egypt (9:18, 23), but He "rained" (מַמְטִיר) bread from heaven for the Israelites (Exod 16:4); d) locusts "came up" (וַיַּעַל) and "covered" (וַיְכַס) the land of Egypt, destroying the food (10:14–15), while in 16:13 quails "came up" (וַתַּעַל) and "covered" (וַתְּכַס) the Israelite camp. Carmichael (*The Story of Creation*, 17) expresses the creation/Exodus connection in a similar way: "Yahweh's work in Egypt constitutes wonders, miracles of nature, and embraces all, or almost all, of the created order . . . He is the Yahweh of the 'mighty hand and stretched out arm,' involved with water, animals, insects, reptiles (Exod 7:9–10, the tanninim of Gen 1:21), land (in the form of dust), plants and fruit trees (Exod 10:15, the same distinction as in Gen 1:12), darkness (for the Egyptians), light (for the Israelites), and humankind (the firstborn). After the wonders of Egypt he produces a cloud by day and fire by night, and he makes the sea dry land. All in all these wonders represent 'the great work [hand] of Yahweh'" (Exod 14:32).

what had begun in Eden.[41] This explains the Torah's emphasis on abundant life and growth as the natural fruit of faithfulness to the covenant and the logical outcome of the commandment to "be fruitful and multiply." Obedience to the law means conformity to the creational order that God has restored by His sovereign redemptive activity; it is the very source of life.[42]

The Sages developed the idea of the Sinai revelation and gift of the Torah as a corrective and remedy to the Fall, and the way for Israel to regain the divine image lost when Adam sinned.[43] Israel's cosmic role is seen in a midrash stating that the extension of God's cosmic plan to all creation was dependent upon Israel's acceptance of the (pre-existent) Torah at Sinai.[44] In similar fashion, the Ten Commandments establishing God's divine law are elevated to a position of cosmic importance in corresponding to the ten words by which the world was created. The words of the Commandments – and the tablets on which they are engraved – are divine, created by God's own hand at twilight on the eve of the first Sabbath at the close of creation; thus they form the

41 In Och's words ("Creation and Redemption," 238): "The journey of man which began at the Garden of Eden moves on to its ultimate destination: Mount Sinai. The theophany at Sinai marks the culmination and fulfillment of God's creational plan. The encounter between God and Israel at Sinai can be seen as a return to beginnings, an iterative event which is a reenactment of the original encounter between God and man at Eden. For this purpose, God has created a new people to stand before Him at Sinai as Adam stood in His presence at Eden. What began at Eden is now completed at Sinai. At Sinai, the people of Israel are called on to become participants in the renewal and maintenance of the created order."

42 Cf. Deut 4:40; 11:8–9; 16:20; 22:7. Cf. Fretheim, "The Reclamation of Creation," 360, 362. Compare Philo (*De op. mundi* 3) who writes that the law corresponds to the world and the world to the law.

43 Cf. *GenR* 19:7; *CantR* 5:1 §1; *b. Shabbat* 145b–146a; *b. Avodah Zarah* 22b; *b. Yebam.* 103b: "when the serpent came upon Eve he injected lust into her: [as for] the Israelites who stood at Mount Sinai, their lustfulness departed." On Sinai as remedy to the fall, see Scroggs, *The Last Adam – A Study in Pauline Anthropology*, 52–54.

44 "God said to the objects of creation, 'If Israel accepts the Torah, you shall continue and endure, otherwise, I shall turn everything back into chaos again.' The whole of creation was thus kept in dread and suspense until the revelation at Sinai, when Israel received and accepted the Torah, and so fulfilled the condition made by God when He created the universe" (*b. Shabbat* 88a); cf. Ginzberg, *Legends of the Jews*, 1:52; Och, "Creation and Redemption," 238. On the pre-existence of Torah, cf. *GenR* 1:4 (above, p. 309); *PRK* 12:1. The eternal nature of the Torah is also the basic premise of the Book of Jubilees; cf. Jub. 1:29; 2:22, 29; 3:10, 14, 31, etc.

foundation to the entire created order.[45] Israel's cosmic role in completing the created order is also seen in the correlation between Adam's responsibility to work (עבד) and keep (שמר) the Garden (Gen 2:15), and Israel's call to serve (עבד) the Lord and keep (שמר) the commandments.[46] This implies that Israel's observance of the law is considered to be the continuation of Adam's care of the Garden of Eden.

The Golden Calf as Israel's "Original Sin"

Yet like Eden, which begun as a paradise of communion but ended in alienation, Sinai ends in tragedy. Israel's worship of the golden calf amounts to such a shockingly quick betrayal of the newly formed (nuptial) covenant that the rabbis considered it the equivalent of a bride committing harlotry while still under the bridal canopy. In other sources, the building of the calf is compared to Adam's eating of the forbidden fruit in Eden and his subsequent loss of the divine nature.[47] The Golden Calf is a reenactment of man's turning away from God – an act of divine creation followed by an act of human de-creation and renewed alienation. Israel's journey from Sinai resumes mankind's journey that began with the expulsion from Eden. As the flaming sword barred Adam and Eve from reentering the Garden, the flaming pillar of fire accompanying the Israelites in the desert, while indicating God's presence and protection for His people, now also stands between them as the sign of His inapproachability. Israel's failure to fulfill her calling as agent of God's work of (re-)creation and redemption calls for a more sustained and permanent means of actualizing the divine Presence on earth among His people.

7.2.3 *Nuptial Union in the Temple*

In the early Jewish worldview, God's "solution" to Israel's breaching of the Sinai covenant is His ongoing presence among His people in the Tabernacle and Temple. Three of the Temple's key functions will be reviewed in this section: first, we will review the sanctuary's role as *nuptial chamber* and consecrated place of the union between God and Israel (7.2.3.1). Second, we will look at the Temple as *liturgical actualization of Sinai* and locus of Israel's ongoing encounter with the divine (7.2.3.2). Third, we will examine the Temple's *cosmic symbolism* and how by actualizing the Sinai covenant the Temple was intended to

45 *M. Avot* 5:1, 9; ARN-A 31, 90; *GenR* 17:1; *b. Rosh HaShanah* 32a; *Pesikta Rabbati* 21, 108. Cf. *Ginzberg, Legends of the Jews*, I:49; III: 104–105, 119; V:63 n. 1; VI:43 n. 237, 49 n. 258; Och, "Creation and Redemption," 239; Carmichael, *The Story of Creation*, 28–29.

46 *Sifre Deut* 41; cf. *GenR* 16:5; *CantR* 1:2.

47 *LevR* 11:1, 3; *CantR* 3:6–7; *NumR* 16:24; *ExodR* 32:1. Cf. Scroggs, *The Last Adam*, 53.

complete and perfect creation (7.2.3.3). Fourth, we will consider how this perfection of creation was understood to be the equivalent of returning humanity to the *Garden of Eden* (7.2.3.4).

7.2.3.1 Tabernacle and Temple as Nuptial Chamber

The Temple as place of union between the divine and the human is the dwelling place of God's *kedushah* – a term whose root ק.ד.ש, as we have seen, carries nuptial/sexual as well as cultic connotations. Temples in the ancient world were regarded as nuptial chambers where the divine powers of fertility celebrated their wedding feast for the purpose of ensuring the fruitfulness of the earth.[48] Likewise, the Jewish Temple was imbued with a nuptial meaning that gradually developed into the full-blown metaphor of the Temple as nuptial chamber or couch for God and His bride, the community of Israel – represented by the High Priest.[49]

The nuptial symbolism of the prophets involves a cultic element indicating that Israel's marital covenant with YHWH was inseparable from her worship. In most cases it is expressed negatively, equating Israel's idolatry with fornication and adultery. For Hosea and Jeremiah, the nation's Baal fertility cult (involving libations, sacrifices, and the burning of incense) results in the termination of her Sabbaths, festivals, and Temple service, and (for Jeremiah) in the silencing of the voice of the bridegroom and bride. Ezekiel depicts Israel's harlotry as an illicit cult characterized by the "pleasing odor" of her offerings rising up to foreign gods, the defilement of the sanctuary, and the profanation of the Sabbath. Isaiah also describes Israel's idolatrous sacrifices in sexual terms, and the future restoration of the nuptial covenant with YHWH is linked with the cultic eating of food and drinking wine in His courts.

In Wisdom literature, the figure of Lady Wisdom is closely connected with the sanctuary. Sirach claims that she "ministered" before God in the Tabernacle and found a "resting place" in the sanctuary in Zion. In the Wisdom of Solomon, she sits by God's throne, and her presence is indispensable for the Temple's

48 Cf. Patai, *Man and Temple*, 88–90 and below.

49 Elior (*The Three Temples*, 54–55) notes the affinity in the ancient world between "the sanctity of the Temple, ceremonially expressed through interlocking septuples of time, place, and ritual in the Holy of Holies (*kodesh kodashim*) . . . and *kidushin*, 'sanctification', the Hebrew term for betrothal and conjugal union – a personal covenant whose purpose is to perpetuate life, also associated with ceremony and number, with cycle and counting, with sanctity and purity. Both the sanctity of the Temple and betrothal connect with the number seven, with oaths, with 'a covenant for all time,' with blessing and fertility and the cycle of life."

construction. The fact that she is found primarily in the Temple, combined with the insistent invitation to men that they embrace and love her, implies that this union is to take place in the sanctuary, where the people are represented by the High Priest. This means that the writers of wisdom literature see the Temple as a nuptial chamber and the impartation of divine wisdom to man as a nuptial union.[50]

We have also seen the Temple's prominent role as place of nuptial union between God and Israel as expressed in the rabbinic exegesis of the Song of Songs. Events of the Exodus such as the Song at the Sea, the Sinai revelation, the *Shema*, and the entrance into the Promised Land are interpreted not only nuptially but also as referring to the Temple, with additional connections made between nuptial covenant, Temple worship and Israel's willingness to be martyred for her divine lover.

7.2.3.2 Tabernacle/Temple as Liturgical Actualization of Sinai

The connection between nuptial symbolism and Temple begs the question: why was this symbolic connection necessary if the Sinai theophany already functioned as "nuptial moment" between God and Israel? The answer lies in the fact that the betrothal between God and Israel at Mount Sinai was a one-time event that only lasted as long as the Israelites remained at the foot of the Mount. Moreover, it had been seriously breached by the worship of the golden calf. The Tabernacle is the continued locus of the nuptial union between the Lord and His people for the following generations as they wander through the desert towards the Promised Land.[51] This role is taken up by the Temple after they settle in the land and make Jerusalem their capital. The holy

50 It is possible that even the author of the Canticle metaphorically alludes to the Temple as the implicit place of union between lover and beloved. Robert (*Le Cantique des Cantiques*, 48–49), followed by Feuillet ("Le Cantique des Cantiques et la tradition biblique," 716–18), proposes that the description of the bridegroom in Cant 5:10–16 is in fact a veiled description of Solomon's Temple, including the gold of the Holy of Holies (1 Kgs 6:20–21; 2 Chr 3:8), the palms decorating the sanctuary (1 Kgs 6:18, 29, 32, 35), the water of the brazen sea (1 Kgs 7:23–26; 2 Chr 4:2–5), the flowers on the walls of the Temple (1 Kgs 6:29), the top of the pillars in the shape of lilies (1 Kgs 7:22), the rods/panels comprising the Temple's doors, and the cedar of Lebanon (1 Kgs 6:9–18).

51 On the connections between Sinai and Sanctuary, see Berman, *The Temple*, 35–56. Levenson discusses the nuptial dimension of the Sinai covenant (*Sinai and Zion*, 75–80), the need for it to be perpetually renewed (80–86), and the transferral of the locus of revelation from Sinai to Zion – a new "holy mountain" where the visionary experience of God is perpetuated (95) and the covenant renewal is effected (91–92): "in short, the renewal of the Sinaitic covenant has become the liturgy of the Temple in Jerusalem . . . that shrine

sanctuary, coming into existence by divine decree at Sinai, constitutes the liturgical extension, the actualization in the present and the perpetuation into the future of Israel's original union with God celebrated at Sinai. Like Sinai, the Tabernacle is the meeting point between God and Israel, and between heaven and earth.[52]

The intrinsic connection between the Sinai covenant and Temple service is underlined in the Pentateuch by a number of literary devices, such as the parallels between the finale of the Sinai theophany and the last stages of the Tabernacle's construction – indicating that both are equally viewed as the locus of God meeting with His people.[53] This close association of Sinai and Zion

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does not have a cult of its own, but has become a locus for the continuing traditions of the old Israelite tribal league. The voice of Sinai is heard on Zion." (207)

52 As Cassuto expressed it: "In order to understand the significance and purpose of the Tabernacle, we must realize that the children of Israel, after they had been privileged to witness the Revelation of God on Mount Sinai, were about to journey from there and thus draw away from the site of the theophany. So long as they were encamped in the place, they were conscious of God's nearness; but once they set out on their journey, it would seem to them as though the link had been broken, unless there were in their midst a tangible symbol of God's presence among them. It was the function of the Tabernacle [literally, "dwelling"] to serve as such a symbol . . . The nexus between Israel and the Tabernacle is a perpetual extension of the bond that was forged at Sinai between the people and their God." (*A Commentary on the Book of Exodus*, 319; cited in Berman, *The Temple*, 41).

53 The cloud covered both Mount Sinai (Exod 24:15) and the Tent of Meeting (Exod 40:34); the glory of the Lord settled on the mount (Exod 24:16) and in the Tabernacle (Exod 40:34), appearing as a consuming fire in both cases (Exod 24:17; Lev 9:23–24); the Lord called Moses out of the cloud (Exod 24:16) and from the tent (Lev 1:1); all the people saw both theophanies (Exod 24:17; Lev 9:24); Moses went up the mountain/into the tent (Exod 24:18; Lev 9:23) (Berman, *The Temple*, 41–42). Berman notes other similarities between Sinai and the Tabernacle: At Sinai, the divine voice (קוֹל) spoken to the people (Exod 19:5; Deut 4:12, 33, 36; 5:22–26) was the audible manifestation of God's will, communicating to Israel His commandments and directives. After Sinai, the קוֹל continues to be heard perpetually from above the mercy seat upon the Ark (containing the tablets with the Ten Commandments) and between the cherubim (Num 7:89). It is from above the Ark that God promises to Moses: "I will meet with you" and "I will speak with you of all that I will give you in commandment for the people of Israel" (Exod 25:22). The Tabernacle is the place where God communicates his instructions to Israel and is the locus of divine instruction, as Mount Sinai had been at the moment of Revelation. Another common trait is God's appearance to Israel at Sinai in the thick cloud (עָנָן) (Exod 19:9, 16; 24:15–18) signifying His proximity, yet at the same time shielding the people from His immediate Presence, which, if seen "face to face" would cause death (Exod 33:20). The same cloud of glory continued to accompany the Israelites in the Tabernacle (Exod 40:34–38). In addition, the cloud of incense (עֲנַן הַקְּטֹרֶת) rising up in the sanctuary from the altar of incense,

is maintained and developed in Second Temple literature. For Ben Sira, Lady Wisdom is identified on the one hand with the Law of Moses, ministering in the holy Tabernacle on Mount Zion (Sir 24:10, 23), and on the other hand with Simon the high priest who by offering sacrifices perpetuates in the Temple Aaron's priesthood instituted at Sinai (Sir 50).[54] The theological implication is that the two sempiternal "incarnations" of Sinai, the Torah and high priesthood – both now closely associated with Lady Wisdom – permanently remain in the midst of Israel's sanctuary as mediators between God and His people, communicating to them divine illumination, power, glory, holiness, and love.[55] This helps explain the identification of Sinai with Zion in Jubilees, and the role of both places as "mountain of the Lord."[56] The association continues in rabbinic writings where, as we have seen, numerous midrashim interpret verses of the Canticle as simultaneously referring to both Sinai and the Temple.[57]

What does the connection between nuptial symbolism, Sinai and Zion signify? One might argue that at its heart lie the two related notions of covenantal love and sacrifice. We have seen how the sacrificial themes of sanctification/setting apart, renunciation, drawing close, atonement, purification, restitution, and restoring communion through a covenantal meal are all related to nuptial love.[58] Early Jewish texts constantly suggest that the necessary condition for

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positioned in front of the curtain of the innermost sanctuary (Exod 30:1–10, 34–38; Lev 16:12–13), acted as a protective veil and "symbolic buffer" between the outer chamber and the divine Presence in the Holy of Holies just as the cloud had done at Sinai. The altar of burnt offerings at the entrance of the Tabernacle also "simulates" the great consuming fire of God's (unapproachable) Presence that had previously engulfed Mount Sinai (Exod 24:17; Deut 5:22–24). Finally, another key link between Sinai and Zion is the sacrificial system itself, divinely instituted at Horeb and perpetually reenacted in the courts of the sanctuary as the means to atone for sins and enable the communion with God that was first experienced on the mountain. (Berman, *The Temple*, 45)

54 Cf. above, p. 91.

55 On the Temple's role as source of divine power and holiness cf. 1 Cor 7:14 and above, p. 197 n. 238.

56 Cf. Jub. 4:25–26; 8:19–20; above, p. 82.

57 To recall only one example here, in *Mekh BaHodesh* 9, Abraham's vision of the flaming torch passing between the pieces (Gen 15:17), is said to refer to the thundering and lightnings that the people saw at Sinai when God gave them the Law, and also to the Temple and its sacrifices (Laut. II:268).

58 Cf. above, p. 226f. Oddly enough, in his otherwise penetrating analysis of the wisdom mystery and nuptial meaning of the Temple, Seaich seems to completely miss the interrelationship between sacrifice and nuptiality – treating comprehensively the latter but barely ever mentioning the former. One gets the impression that he sees sacrificial ritual and nuptial symbolism as two distinct and even separate aspects of Temple worship,

a nuptial encounter with the divine is precisely sacrifice, instituted as the central component of the Sinai covenant and perpetually offered in the sanctuary courts.

7.2.3.3 Temple as Microcosm

If the Temple is the ongoing actualization of the Sinai covenant for Israel's future generations, its role also extends far beyond the celebration of a national alliance limited to the elect people. In line with many ancient near eastern traditions, the Jerusalem Temple was also imbued with cosmic symbolism: it was viewed as a microcosm that represented, renewed and sustained the entire universe.[59] The basis for this symbolism is found in the sanctuary's role as earthly copy of the heavenly Temple. Moses was to build the Tabernacle and its furnishings in conformity with a divinely revealed blueprint, "according to the pattern for them, which is being shown you on the mountain" (Exod 25:40). This correspondence between earthly and heavenly sanctuaries becomes more explicit in the Wisdom of Solomon, which asserts that the Jerusalem Temple is but a temporal manifestation of the eternal Temple that existed "from the beginning."[60]

As the earthly Temple manifests a measure of the ineffable glory of the heavenly Temple, so does all creation: When Isaiah in his great mystical vision sees the Lord seated on His throne and proclaims His holiness, adding that "the whole earth is full of His glory" (מְלֹא כָל־הָאָרֶץ כְּבוֹדוֹ, Isa 6:3), he is implying that the world is nothing less than the visible manifestation of God sitting enthroned in his Temple.[61] The universe is a cosmic Temple, full of the divine presence, holiness and כָּבוֹד that was manifest at Sinai and continues to be present in "contracted" or "concentrated" form in the Temple (cf. 1 Kgs 8:27;

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the former being primarily the concern of the priestly class and "orthodox" establishment, while the latter is the manifestation of a more charismatic and mystical worship experience.

59 For studies on the Temple as microcosm and the world as macrotemple, cf. Barker, *The Gate of Heaven*, 65–67; 108–114; Patai, *Man and Temple*, 84–87, 105–132; Levenson, "The Temple and the World;" *ibid., Sinai and Zion*, 137–142; *ibid., Creation and the Persistence of Evil*, 90–99; Elior, *The Three Temples*, 37.

60 "You have given command to build a temple on your holy mountain, and an altar in the city of your habitation, a copy of the holy tent which you prepared from the beginning" (Wis 9:8). This theme is extensively developed in the Epistle to the Hebrews, which speaks of the Temple sacrifices and priesthood as "a copy and shadow of the heavenly sanctuary" which is "the true tent which is set up not by man but by the Lord" – namely heaven itself, which Christ entered by merit of his own self-sacrifice (Heb 8:2, 5; 9:23–24).

61 Levenson, "The Temple and the World," 290.

Isa 66:1–2; Sir 24:3–11). The common role of both Temple and creation as visible manifestations of the invisible divine realm implies a close correspondence between them.[62]

Evidence for the cosmological view of the Temple is found in the psalmist's declaration that God built his sanctuary on Mount Zion "like the heights" (כְּמוֹ־רָמִים – the heavens) and at the same time "like the earth that He established forever" (Ps 78:69). The idea is also manifest in the parallels between the creation narrative and building of the Tabernacle,[63] the *kedushah* of the Sabbath linking creation, Sinai, and the Tabernacle/Temple,[64] and the motif of 'sevens' in the narratives of the seven days of creation and of the Temple's construction, built in seven years.[65] Read in this light, Genesis 1 appears to be an account of the functional origins of the cosmos as a Temple. Jubilees confirms this idea by tracing a direct link between the work of creation and the aim of establishing an eternal temple on Mount Zion: at the moment of the Sinai revelation (Jub. 1:1–4) the narrator claims to record the events "from the beginning of creation till [God's] sanctuary has been built among them for all eternity," when He appears as "King on Mount Zion for all eternity, and Zion and Jerusalem shall be holy" (Jub. 1:27–28).

The cosmic symbolism of the Temple is even more vivid in Philo. In continuity with the Wisdom of Solomon, the Alexandrian views creation as a copy of the heavenly world and the whole universe as "the highest and truest temple of God,"[66] adding a dimension of cosmic anthropology where both man and the cosmos play parallel roles in reflecting the divine image.[67] Elsewhere,

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62 Walton (*The Lost World of Genesis One*, 84) summarizes the Temple/cosmos correspondence in five points: (1) In the Bible and in the ANE the Temple is viewed as a microcosm; (2) the Temple is designed with the imagery of the cosmos; (3) the Temple is related to the functions of the cosmos; (4) the creation of the Temple is parallel to the creation of the cosmos; (5) In the Bible the cosmos can be viewed as a Temple.

63 Cf. above, p. 83 (esp. n. 64), p. 90 n. 87.

64 Cf. above, p. 359f.

65 The Temple, built in seven years, was inaugurated during the seven-day long feast of *Sukkot* celebrated in the seventh month (1 Kgs 6:37–38). On the motif of "sevens" as golden thread between the creation of the world and building of the Temple, cf. Levenson, "The Temple and the World," 288–89.

66 *De spec. leg.* 1:66–67. For studies of Philo's view of the Temple and its cosmic symbolism, see Hayward, *The Jewish Temple*, 108–141; Briggs, *Jewish Temple Imagery*, 204–208.

67 "If the image [Adam] be a part of the [divine] image, then manifestly so is the entire form, namely, the whole of this world perceptible by the external senses, which is a greater imitation of the divine image than the human form is (*De op. mundi* 25)." For there are, as it seems, two temples of God; one being this universe, in which the high priest is the divine

Philo describes the cosmic symbolism of the Temple in detail,[68] and he narrows down his cosmic anthropology to the figure of the high priest,[69] following Wisdom tradition.[70] This highlights Philo's view of the high priest as representative not only of Israel but also of all humanity: "Whenever [the high priest] enters the temple to offer up the prayers and sacrifices in use among his nation, all the world may likewise enter in with him" (*De Vit. Mos.* 2:133).[71] For Philo, therefore, the heavenly world/divine image is revealed through a process of increasing contraction and concentration:

Divine/heavenly realm > visible world > Temple > high priest

When one considers Philo's cosmic view of the Temple together with his nuptial symbolism – revolving around the cherubim in the Holy of Holies as symbols of the marriage between God and Wisdom and between Wisdom and

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word, his own first-born son. The other is the rational soul, the priest of which is the real true man . . ." (*De somniis* 1:215). Cf. Seaich, *A Great Mystery*, 97.

68 The menorah represents the sun and stars in heaven; the altar of incense is an emblem of the things of earth; and the table of showbread symbolizes the nourishment proceeding from heaven and earth (*De vita Mosis* 2:102–105).

69 The sacred vestments of the high priest are a "copy and representation of the world; and the parts are a representation of the separate parts of the world" – including the air, earth, and water (*De vita Mosis* 2:117–121). The emeralds on his shoulders are symbols of the sun and moon (or two hemispheres) and the twelve stones on the breastplate are the twelve signs of the zodiac divided into the four seasons (2:122–124). Elsewhere, Philo identifies the high priest as the divine *Logos* (*De somniis* 1:215 and below, p. 396).

70 Cf. Sir 50 and Wis 18:24: "For upon [Aaron's] long robe the whole world was depicted, and the glories of the fathers were engraved on the four rows of stones, and thy majesty on the diadem upon his head."

71 Josephus (*Ant.* 3.7.7) also describes the Tabernacle and high priestly garments as "made in way of imitation and representation of the universe": three parts of the Tabernacle = three parts of the world (court = sea; Holy Place = land; Holy of Holies = heavens); 12 loaves = 12 months; menorah of 70 parts = 70 divisions of the planets; 7 lamps of the menorah = course of the (7) planets; four materials of veils = four elements (fine linen = earth; purple = sea, blue = air; scarlet = fire); vestments of the high-priest: linen = earth; blue cloth = sky; pomegranate = lightning; noise of its bells = thunder; ephod = universe; gold = sun; breastplate = earth; girdle = ocean; two sardonyxes = sun and moon; 12 stones of breastplate = twelve months or signs of zodiac; blue mitre = heavens. Josephus describes the Temple in similar terms (*Wars* 5.5.4–5). This indicates that for Josephus the Temple is indeed "an *eikon*, an image, an epitome of the world . . . It is the world *in nuce*, and the world is the Temple *in extenso*" (Levenson, "The Temple and the World," 285). On Josephus' cosmic-Temple symbolism, cf. Patai, *Man and Temple*, 112–13; Walton, *The Lost World of Genesis One*, 81–82; Hayward, *The Jewish Temple*, 142–53; Briggs, *Jewish Temple Imagery*, 208–211.

man – one arrives at a vision of the world as a cosmic wedding, where the marriage between Wisdom and creation is typified and reenacted in the Temple through the ministry of the high priest.

The correspondence between Temple and created order is also common in rabbinic literature, often appearing side-by-side with cosmic nuptial symbolism. On a first level, legends depict the creation of the world as a sort of cosmic mating between the "upper male waters" and "lower female waters."[72] According to some rabbis, this cosmic (re-)union is reenacted every time it rains, when the lower female waters rise to receive the upper male waters.[73] In other traditions, the rain comes down to mate with the earth to fructify it.[74] On a second level, the abundant rains and ensuing fruitfulness of the earth originate from the Temple, or more specifically from the nuptial union between God and Israel taking place within it, enacted through the sacrificial service.[75] The Temple as nuptial source of the world's fertility and fruitfulness is seen in

72 According to these legends, the waters were originally united before creation when "the world was but water in water" (*y. Hag.* 77a; *GenR* 5:2; *ExodR* 15:22) until God forcibly separated them, relegating half to the firmament above and half to the ocean below (*GenR* 4:5). The waters were so distressed by this separation that they wept (*GenR* 5:4), and since then, they unceasingly long to be reunited: "the only desire of the rains is for the earth" (*GenR* 20:7; *CantR* 7:11, as interpretation of the verse "I am my beloved's, and his desire is for me."). One notices a close similarity with the myth of the androgynous first man, originally male and female, then separated into two halves that always seek to restore their original union. Patai (*Man and Temple*, 59–67) elaborates on how the flood in Noah's days represents a destructive form of the reunion of the waters from above and below, as well as describing the ANE background to the idea of floods being the result of union between male and female waters.

73 In a saying attributed to R. Levi: "The upper waters are male and the lower waters are female. And these say to those: Receive us, you are the creation of the Holy One and we are His envoys. Immediately they receive them . . . like onto this female that opens before the male" (*GenR* 13:13; cf. *y. Ber.* 14a; *y. Ta'anit* 64b). Elsewhere, R. Abbahu refers to the upper waters as "bridegroom" and to the lower waters as "bride": "When do we begin to recite the blessing over rain? When the bridegroom goes forth to meet the bride" (*b. Ta'anit* 6b). Cf. Patai, *Man and Temple*, 67.

74 Referring to Isaiah's words about the rain coming down to water the earth to make it bring forth and bud (Isa 55:10), R. Judah is recorded as saying that "rain is the husband of the soil" (*b. Ta'anit* 6b; cf. *y. Ber.* 14a; *y. Ta'anit* 64b).

75 The water libation ritual during the feast of Sukkot played a particular role for the purpose of inducing rainfall. Patai (*Man and Temple*, 24–47) shows how these rituals and the myths surrounding them were intended to re-enact the creation of the world.

its identification with Solomon's *leafy couch/bed*, or with the lovers' *house*.[76] It is also identified with Solomon's palanquin and cosmically associated with the world, the heavenly Throne of Glory, and the *even shetiyah* – the foundation stone upon which the world was established.[77] Other traditions recall that from this same foundation stone upon which the Temple was built the first ray of light illuminated the world – a symbol of health, life, joy and success.[78] The Temple on God's cosmic mountain of Zion, rising upon the *even shetiyah*, was known to be the center or "navel of the world," the *axis mundi* or meeting point of heaven and earth out of which flowed the primeval waters of the deep. The world was nourished by these life-giving waters just as an embryo receives its nourishment from the navel.[79] While discussing the *even shetiyah* upon which the Ark of the Covenant was placed, the Talmud states that "from it the world was founded" and "the world was created beginning from Zion."[80] Having conceptually existed since the beginning of creation (*GenR* 1:4; 2:5; 3:9), the Temple is thus a microcosm, responsible for the stability of the universe.[81] It is significant that these Talmudic remarks on the foundation

76 *Mekh Pisḥa* 14; *PRK* 1:4; *CantR* 1:16; *TgCant* 1:16–17; 3:7. The nuptial role of the Temple as source of fertility and life is well illustrated in the later *Midrash Tanhuma*'s comment on the "couch" of Cant 3:7: "And why was the Temple compared to a couch? Because just as this couch serves fruitfulness and multiplication, even so everything that was in the Temple was fruitful and multiplied" (*Tanhuma Num.* ed. Buber, 33). Cf. Patai, *Man and Temple*, 87, 90.

77 *PRK* 1:2; *TgCant* 3:9–10; *CantR* 3:9–10.

78 Cf. *GenR* 3:4.

79 On the Temple as navel of the world, cf. Patai, *Man and Temple*, 85–87; Levenson, *Sinai and Zion*, 115–122; 134–37.

80 The passage continues by stating that "both [the generations of the heavens and the earth (Gen 2:4)] were created from Zion, as Scripture says: 'Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God hath shined forth', that means from it the beauty of the world was perfected" (*b. Yoma* 54b). Cf. Levenson, *Sinai and Zion*, 118.

81 A midrash attributed to a 2nd century sage, R. Pinhas ben Ya'ir, combines Philo's cosmological and theosophical interpretation of the tabernacle and cherubim: "The Tabernacle was made to correspond to the Creation of the world. The two Cherubs over the Ark of the Covenant were made to correspond to the two holy names [of God]. The heaven, the earth and the sea are houses with bolts. The house of the Holy of Holies was made to correspond to the highest heaven. The outer Holy House was made to correspond to the earth. And the courtyard was made to correspond to the sea. The eleven hangings of the Tabernacle were made to correspond to the highest heaven. The table was made to correspond to the earth. The two shewbreads were arranged to correspond to the fruit of the earth. 'In two rows, six in a row' (Lev. 24:6) [were set the twelve cakes] to correspond to the months of summer and winter. The laver was made to correspond to the sea and

of the world originating from Zion follow the discussions about the staves of the Ark protruding through the curtain as the breasts of a woman (cf. Cant 1:13), and the intertwined cherubim in the Holy of Holies representing the love of God for Israel. This points again to the idea that the creation of the world originating from the Temple is seen as a nuptial act. In the same vein, the Temple's frequent identification with the Shulamite's "*chamber of her who conceived me*" (Cant 3:4),[82] or "*garden*" (Cant 4:16, 5:1) indicates that it is the divine bridal chamber and place of God's return to earth.[83] As the home of the indwelling *Shekhinah*, providing a dwelling place for God who is the source of all blessings, the Temple – mystically representing the origins of the cosmos – is a source of divine, Edenic blessing, fruitfulness and welfare on nature, multiplying crops and warding off catastrophes not only to Israel but also to the whole world.[84]

7.2.3.4 Temple as Garden of Eden

As zone of the sacred, the Temple erects through its laws of worship a barrier of holiness between the common and the sanctified. It is the ideal place where

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the candlestick was made to correspond to the lights [of heaven]." The passage goes on to specify how the two pillars at the porch of the Temple (cf. 1 Kgs 7:21) correspond to the moon and the sun, and that the cherubim were the most important feature of the Temple: "It was due to them, and due to their maker that the Temple stood. They were the head of everything that was in the Temple, for the Shekhina rested on them and on the Ark, and from there He spoke to Moses" (*Midrash Tadshe*, ed. Jellinek, *Bet HaMidrash* iii, 164–167); Cf. Patai, *Man and Temple*, 108–109; *ibid*., *The Hebrew Goddess*, 83–84.

82 *Mekh Shirata* 3; *Mekh de-RaShBY Shirata* 29:1; *LevR* 1:10; *CantR* 3:4 §1; *TgCant* 3:4.

83 *LevR* 9:6; *PRK* 1:1; *CantR* 1:2; 1:4a §1; 5:1 §1; *TgCant* 4:16, 5:1, 6:2, 11.

84 The idea of the Temple's influence on the forces of nature is attested as early as the prophet Haggai, who lamented that the heavens withheld the dew and the earth its produce because the Lord's House laid waste, and it frequently returns in rabbinic literature (Hag 1:9–11). *M. Avot* 1:2 tells us that one of the three things upon which the world rests is the Temple service; *PRK* 1:5 claims that the earth became stable after the Tabernacle was built; *t. Sukkah* 3:18; *t. Rosh Hashanah* 1:12; *b. Rosh Hashanah* 16a describe how the bringing of offerings at each feast brings a corresponding blessing on the crops or rain; ARN-A (Schechter, 19–20); ARN-B 5 (Schechter, 18–19); *y. Peah* 20a; *y. Sotah* 17b; *b. Ketubot* 111b–112a; *Tanhuma Exod.* (Buber, 102–03) depict how the offering of sacrifices brought an extraordinary fertility to Israel which disappeared when the Temple was destroyed; *b. Baba Batra* 25a–25b states that the rain stopped with the end of the Temple. Cf. Patai, *Man and Temple*, 121–124. In Levenson's words, chaos is neutralized by cult: as creation emerged from chaos in Gen 1:1–2:3, "it is through the cult that we are enabled to cope with evil, for it is the cult that builds and maintains order, transforms chaos into creation, ennobles humanity, and realizes the kingship of the God who has ordained the cult and commanded that it be guarded and practiced" (*Creation and the Persistence of Evil*, 127).

time stands still or, in Levenson's words, a pure and pristine "enclave of ideal reality within the world of profanity."[85] From this it is but a small step to arrive at the Temple's identification with the Garden of Eden.[86] The Temple seems intentionally designed to recall ancient traditions of the Garden of Eden, understood to be a "prototype of the conditions and environment in which man can intimately encounter God."[87]

Before examining the connection between the Temple and Eden, we should say a few words about the relationship between Israel and Eden. Berman shows how the land of Israel could be seen as a "conceptual expansion of the garden of Eden."[88] For example, the covenantal language of Lev 26:3–12 – promising to Israel abundant rains, a fertile land, plentiful fruit, vintage and bread, peace and security, and the absence of evil beasts if they keep God's Sabbaths, reverence His sanctuary and observe His commandments – seems to be a "simulation of the garden of Eden." As it was the case for Adam in the Garden, Israel's covenant with God requires the observance of commandments (v. 3); as God planted the Garden and made the rivers of Eden, Israel's faithfulness guarantees that God will grant rain, fertility and peace in the land; as Adam and Eve were told to be fruitful and multiply (פְּרוּ וּרְבוּ), God will make Israel fruitful and multiply them (וְהִפְרֵיתִי אֶתְכֶם וְהִרְבֵּיתִי אֶתְכֶם, Lev 26:9). Finally, just as God "walked" in the Garden (מִתְהַלֵּךְ), faithfulness to the covenant guarantees that God will "walk" among His people (וְהִתְהַלַּכְתִּי בְּתוֹכְכֶם, Lev 26:12). And just as Adam and Eve's disobedience led to their expulsion from Eden, sin and disobedience will result in Israel's banishment and exile from the land (Lev 26:33).

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85 Levenson, *Sinai and Zion*, 127–128.

86 Wenham notes: "The Garden of Eden is not viewed by the author of Genesis simply as a piece of Mesopotamian farmland, but as an archetypal sanctuary, that is a place where God dwells and where man should worship him. Many of the features of the garden may also be found in later sanctuaries particularly the tabernacle or Jerusalem temple. These parallels suggest that the garden itself is understood as a sort of sanctuary" (Wenham, "Sanctuary Symbolism in the Garden of Eden Story," 399). Walton states that the Temple represents both the cosmos at large and Eden as the "innermost" sacred space of the universe and archetypal sanctuary: "The Garden of Eden was sacred space and the temple/tabernacle contained imagery of the garden and the cosmos . . . The temple is a microcosm, and Eden is represented in the antechamber that serves as sacred space adjoining the Presence of God as an archetypal sanctuary" (Walton, *The Lost World of Genesis One*, 83).

87 Berman, *The Temple*, 22; cf. 21–34. For studies on the Temple as Eden, see Barker, *The Gate of Heaven*, 57–103; Elior, "The Jerusalem Temple," 134–36; Levenson, *Sinai and Zion*, 128–37; Wenham, "Sanctuary Symbolism."

88 On Israel as Eden, cf. Berman, *The Temple*, 23–26.

This view of Israel as Eden is also reflected in texts such as Isa 51:3, where restored Zion is compared to Eden and the "Garden of the Lord."

If the Land of Israel is a "simulation of Eden" where the Israelites encounter God, the Temple as spiritual center of the nation is the apex of this communion – and it too follows the paradigm of Eden. At the center of the Garden stood the Tree of Life. At the heart of the sanctuary is the Ark of the Covenant containing the tablets of the testimony which symbolize the Torah, source of life (Deut 30:15–16), later identified with Wisdom and known as a "Tree of Life" (Prov 3:18; Sir 24:23).[89] As the Cherubim guarded the presence of God and access to the Tree in the Garden (Gen 3:24), cherubim "guard" the divine Presence in the Holy of Holies (Exod 25:20–21; 26:1; 26:31).[90] As God "walked" (מִתְהַלֵּךְ) in the Garden (Gen 3:8), so He "walks" in the sanctuary (Deut 23:14; 2 Sam 7:6–7). As Adam was commanded to "work" and "guard" the Garden (לְעָבְדָהּ וּלְשָׁמְרָהּ, Gen 2:15), so the priests and levites "work" (עֲבֹדָה) and "guard" (שֹׁמְרִים) the sanctuary.[91] Both Eden and the sanctuary were entered from the East. There was gold in Eden, the main material of which most sacred items in the sanctuary were made.[92] We have spoken at length about the waters flowing from the Temple and their correlation with the waters of Eden.[93] Both sanctified domains were highly regulated: As it was in the Garden, infraction in the sanctuary was punishable by death (Gen 2:17; Exod 28:43; Lev 10:9). The Midrash takes these biblical parallels to their logical conclusion: when God banished Adam from Eden he revealed to him the destruction of the Temple (*GenR* 21:8), because both events represent the same thing: the end of communion with God brought about by human sin.

In summary, we may illustrate the concentric levels of Temple symbolism in the following way, where the Temple represents in its broadest sense the world, then Israel, then Eden:

Temple = Cosmos > Israel > Eden

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89 Some scholars have also proposed that the tabernacle menorah was a stylized tree of life. Cf. C.L. Meyers, *The Tabernacle Menorah* (Missoula: Scholars Press, 1976); Wenham, "Sanctuary Symbolism," 401.

90 The cherubim also "guard" the Presence of God on the moving Holy of Holies of Ezekiel's *merkavah* (Ezek 10:1–22).

91 Num 3:7–8, 38; 4:23, 47; 8:26; 18:5–7. This is the interpretation of *GenR* 16:5, which interprets לְעָבְדָהּ וּלְשָׁמְרָהּ as referring to the Temple sacrifices.

92 Ezekiel 28:13 also recalls a tradition of nine precious stones in Eden, which are the same as nine of the twelve stones on the high priest's breastplate (Exod 28:17–20).

93 This tradition is preserved in the psalms (36:9; 46:4), prophets (Ezek 47:1–12; Joel 3:17–18; Zech 14:8–9), wisdom literature (Sir 24:25–27), pseudepigrapha (*Jos. Asen.* 2:17–20), NT (Rev 22:1–2), and rabbinic texts (*LevR* 34:15; *TgCant* 4:12, 15). Cf. above, p. 77f.

This multi-layered symbolism corresponds to the increasing sanctity of the Temple courts as one approaches the heart of the Temple: beginning with the court of Gentiles (the world), through the courts of women and of Israel, into the court of priests and into the sanctuary and Holy of Holies, where the Eden symbolism is the strongest.

Second Temple literature amply attests to the Temple's identification with Eden. In addition to Sirach 24's evocative Edenic setting of the sanctuary on God's holy mountain, as we have seen, *Jubilees* closely associates the Garden of Eden, Mount Sinai, and Mount Zion, identifying these holy places with God's mythical holy mountain which constituted the foundation of all creation (Jub. 4:26; 8:19–20).[94] Moreover, the Garden of Eden is "holier than all the earth besides" (Jub. 3:12); Noah recognized it as the "Holy of Holies" and "dwelling of the Lord." There, Adam made an offering of frankincense, galbanum and stacte – the ingredients used to make incense for the Tabernacle service (Jub. 3:27), and Enoch returned there to do the same (Jub. 4:25). Hence for the author of Jubilees the Edenic sanctuary was an integral part of creation from the very beginning, and Adam was the first priest, representative of the human race, who offered the first sacrifice.[95] Similar traditions are preserved in the *Apocalypse of Moses* and *Life of Adam and Eve*, where Adam takes sweet spices and fragrant herbs from Eden to make an offering to God after he leaves paradise (*Apoc. Mos.* 29:3–6; *Vita Adae* 43:3). In *Apoc. Mos.* 22:3–4, "God went up into paradise, mounted on the chariot of his cherubim . . . and the throne of God was fixed where the Tree of Life was," and in 1 Enoch 25, Enoch sees the Tree of Life "transplanted to the holy place, to the temple of the Lord" situated on a high mountain which is the throne of God. Finally, in 2 Baruch 4:3–6, the Temple is associated with Paradise and Sinai; God even revealed it to Adam in Eden, to Abraham when He formed the covenant "between the pieces," and to Moses on Mount Sinai.[96]

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94 Cf. above, pp. 80–82.

95 In discussing the image of Eden as primeval sanctuary in Jubilees, Hayward notes that if the expulsion of Adam and Eve from Eden was seen as their removal from the place of God's most immediate presence, the high priest's entrance into the Holy of Holies on Yom Kippur might "typologically correspond to the first man's return to Eden, for a season, to be reconciled with his Maker face to face" (*The Jewish Temple*, 89).

96 "This building now built in your midst is not that which is revealed with Me, that which was prepared beforehand here from the time when I took counsel to make Paradise, and showed it to Adam before he sinned, but when he transgressed the commandment it was removed from him, as also Paradise. And after these things I showed it to My servant Abraham by night among the portions of the victims. And again also I showed it to Moses on Mount Sinai when I showed to him the likeness of the tabernacle and all its vessels. And now, behold, it is preserved with Me, as also Paradise." (2 Bar. 4:3–6)

We have noted the abundance of Eden-Temple associations in rabbinic literature, such as the Temple's cedar and gold from the Garden of Eden (*GenR* 15:1; 16:2), the relation of the sacrificial worship with Adam's work in the Garden (*GenR* 16:5; cf. *LevR* 2:7–8),[97] the covenantal feast related to the great moments of salvation history (*LevR* 11:4; cf. Prov 9:1–4), and the water libations of Sukkot in the Temple identified with the waters of creation (*t. Sukkah* 3:3–11).[98] When one adds the nuptial element to these Eden-Temple connections, one easily arrives at the view held by *PRK* that the *Shekhinah* originally dwelt in Eden, was lost because of human sin, and was restored anew by Her solemn entrance into the Tabernacle, expressed in the suggestive words of the Canticle: "*I come into my garden, my sister, my bride*" (Cant 5:1). These associations also logically lead to the understanding of the destruction of the Temple as a re-enactment of the expulsion from Eden and type of spiritual "divorce" (*GenR* 20:7).

Memory, Liturgy, Eschatology: Cosmic, Mystical, and Ultimate Marriage

The Temple as nuptial chamber fulfilled a threefold role: First, it was understood to be the place of memory and commemoration of the cosmic covenant between God and mankind, signifying the completion of creation and symbolic return to the primeval sanctuary of the Garden of Eden. Second, it was the perpetual remembrance and reactualization of the Sinai nuptial covenant, reenacted and extended through time in the sacrificial liturgy. Third, the Temple anticipated its own fulfillment in the eschatological wedding of the messianic age. It is to this last aspect of nuptial symbolism that we now turn.

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97 And also with the interaction between beloved and lover in the Canticle (*LevR* 2:11; 9:6–7; *CantR* 1:2).

98 Aetiological connections between the Temple and Eden are also found in the Targumic tradition: According to Targum Pseudo-Jonathan, Adam was created on the "mountain of worship" (טוור פולחנא) with "dust from the place of the sanctuary" before he was placed in the adjacent Garden (Tg. Jon. Gen 2:7, 15). When Adam was cast out, he went and dwelt on Mount Moriah – the Temple Mount. At that moment, Eden was revealed as the place where God had "made to dwell the glory of His Shekhinah at first between the two Cherubim," prepared for the righteous who observe the Torah, created even before the world (Tg. Jon. Gen 3:23–24). For a discussion on the rabbinic parallels between paradise and Temple, cf. Manns, *L'évangile de Jean à la lumière du Judaïsme*, 411–420.

7.2.4 *Eschatological Fulfillment of the Mystical Marriage*

We will now examine the eschatological dimension of the marriage between God and Israel. First, we shall summarize the eschatological nuptial passages that we have surveyed in our textual study, noting the significant role of realized eschatology, that is, how the tragic events in Israel's history led to the conceptual transformation of the Temple and the theological relocalization of the seat of the divine presence (7.2.4.1). Second, we will look at one particular form of realized eschatology in Ezekiel's *Merkavah*, and how it conceptually enabled ancient Jews to experience the mystical marriage in the Holy of Holies, at Mount Sinai, and in the Garden of Eden (also identified with the world to come) (7.2.4.2). Third, we will consider an alternate form of realized eschatology, the "anthropological eschatology" in which the community or human person is identified with the Temple (7.2.4.3) – which fittingly prepares the way for the emergence of NT and early Christian nuptial theology (7.3).

7.2.4.1 The Marriage between God and Israel as Eschatological Hope

The prophets viewed the strained marital bond between God and Israel as one that awaited a wondrous future restoration. Hosea looked forward to the end of Baal worship when Israel would call YHWH "אִישִׁי" and be betrothed to Him forever. Jeremiah promised that God's espoused people would return to Zion, and the restored nuptial covenant would be as firmly established as the cosmic order – characterized by Edenic fruitfulness, the voice of the bridegroom and bride, and the voice of those bringing sacrifice into the Temple. Ezekiel also promised that God would reestablish His everlasting covenant with wayward Jerusalem, and Isaiah repeatedly foretold the restoration of God's bride in an Edenic-like Zion. As we have seen, the prophets' eschatological vision of the YHWH-Israel marriage is often related to Eden and creation, to the desert wanderings, and to Zion and the Temple worship. But the marriage is entirely earthly and future, and it makes no reference to a mystical or heavenly realm. It is also metaphorical, an allegorical way of depicting the sublime yet natural restoration of the covenant between God and His people.

The nuptial symbolism of Wisdom literature shifts away from eschatology. Perhaps it is the vivid mystical realism of Lady Wisdom's presence among men – inviting them to join her *now* at her sumptuous feast – that sets the focus upon the present. The vague nuptial allegories of the prophets, metaphorically applied to the collectivity of Israel, really did not have much to offer experientially to the individual in terms of tasting the joys of the nuptial union between God and His people. This lack may have nourished the prophets' imagination and hope for an eschatological completion and fulfillment of the marriage. In wisdom literature, however, the marriage metaphor apparently

turns into a quasi-real, mystical and personal union, now made available to every Israelite who diligently follows the ways of the Lord. Eschatological pining may have decreased for those who were offered nuptial communion with the divine surrogate and could partake of her banquet through the study of Torah and the acquisition of wisdom.[99] Philo's anthropological focus is similar: He is more interested in the present mystical/nuptial experience of wisdom and in the progress of the soul towards virtue than in a collective historical fulfillment of the mystical marriage in some remote future.

In contrast to the *personal, mystical*, and *heavenly* perspective of nuptial symbolism in Wisdom and Second Temple literature, the rabbis tend to return to a *collective, historical*, and *earthly* vision of the eschatological marriage. With the sanctuary now in ruins and the Jews scattered in the diaspora, rabbinic nuptial symbolism naturally emphasizes the hope for the eschatological ingathering of the exiles and the messianic age. Perhaps because of the increasing unrest and hardship of the Jewish communities with the passing of years in the diaspora, the eschatological dimension of rabbinic nuptial symbolism seems to grow in a chronological crescendo: while still discrete in the Tannaitic midrashim, the longing noticeably increases in the Amoraitic texts, and even more so in the Midrash and Targum on the Canticle: We recall the identification of the north and south winds of the Canticle with the Temple sacrifices, the return of the Jews from exile, the coming of the Messiah, and the final rebuilding of the Temple – whose sacrifices will be accompanied by the voice of the bridegroom and bride.[100]

This review of the hope for an ultimate fulfillment of the marriage between God and Israel shows that the eschaton took on several forms in the early

99 Of course, this is not to say that eschatological longing is generally lacking from Second Temple literature, which is far from the case (see below), but this eschatological thrust tends to be absent from the nuptial/wisdom context. The main exception to the lack of nuptial eschatological passages in the literature of this period is found in Sirach 24, which combines the mystical, realized eschatology of Wisdom literature with the end-time visions of the prophets.

100 We also recall Wisdom's feast taking place at creation, at Sinai, in the Tabernacle and in the Age to Come; the beloved *leaping upon the mountains* and the coming springtime of Cant 2:8–13 as the Messiah accomplishing the final redemption; the parable of the king returning to his wife after a long trip; *PRK*'s reinterpretation of Isaiah's eschatological visions alongside many Edenic allusions, Temple images, nuptial parables and messianic expectations; the identification of the palanquin with the Tabernacle, Ark, Temple, World, and heavenly Throne of Glory; and the entire last section of *TgCant* set during the eschatological Messianic Age, characterized by the *Shekhinah*'s permanent and definitive indwelling in Israel.

Jewish imaginaire. In some sources (prophets, rabbinic writings), we encounter eschatology proper, generally represented as the messianic age established on earth at the end of human history. In other sources (Wisdom, apocalyptic and also later *heikhalot* literature) this vision is either combined with or even substituted by "*anticipated*" or "*realized*" eschatology, that is, the unmediated encounter with the divine *now* in a supernatural state that transcends normal earthly life. This extraordinary breaking forth of the divine presence into time, granted to only a select few, functions as an intermediary state between the Temple's sanctuary (traditional home of the "*Real Presence*" of the *Shekhinah* among God's people, yet veiled and strictly off limits to the common people), and the eschaton – when the same *Shekhinah* will become openly manifest to the whole world. It behooves us now to briefly examine the conceptual transformation of the Temple into the eschaton, as well as some of the early Jewish manifestations of "realized eschatology".

7.2.4.2 Realized Eschatology and the *Merkavah*

From Disaster to Eschatological Hope

How did the Temple become associated with the world to come? Can we trace a conceptual development in the transformation of the seat of the divine Presence from Temple to eschaton? It is known that the destruction of both the first and the second Temple became the occasion of phenomenal theological developments in Judaism. The Jews exiled in Babylon had to face the enormous implications of the destruction and exile, and the inevitable question: had God forsaken His covenant with Israel (Cf. Ps 79)?[101] Ezekiel expresses hope in the midst of desolation: despite the departure of the divine glory from the sanctuary (Ezek 9:3; 10:19; 11:23) and the subsequent fall and capture of the city (33:21f), the prophet is confident that not only will the land be rebuilt and the cities resettled (Ezek 36–37), but the divine Glory will also return to dwell in the eschatological Temple (Ezek 43:1–5), out of which will flow the miraculous waters for the healing of the nations (Ezek 47:1–12).

101 This despair is exemplified in the Book of Lamentations, which comes to grips with the desolate state of the virgin daughter of Zion, the former princess now become slave (Lam 1:1), abandoned by her former lovers (1:2, 19), with her former splendor now gone (1:6) and her sanctuary defiled by the nations (1:10). Most troubling is the fact that the Lord Himself has done violence to His Tabernacle, spurning His altar and abandoning His sanctuary (2:6–7). Yet not all hope is lost. In the midst of desolation, the author expresses hope that "the Lord will not cast off forever" and in due time will "show compassion according to the multitude of His mercies" (Lam 3:31–32).

The Merkavah: *Seat of the Divine Presence*

Most remarkable about Ezekiel, however, is his dramatic vision of the *Merkavah* by the River Kevar in Babylon (Ezek 1). For the first time in Israel's sacred history (since Mount Sinai and the Exodus) the vision of the divine glory is revealed *outside* of the Temple, of Jerusalem – and even of Israel. In the midst of national tragedy, the divine כָּבוֹד has left the Temple but not entirely abandoned God's people. The Glory is no longer bound to a physical Holy of Holies: it now follows Israel even in captivity. Ezekiel's vision of the *merkavah* provides the conceptual framework for the theological development of *realized eschatology*, that is, the gradual transformation of the earthly Temple service into mystical rites believed to grant access to celestial shrines, anticipating the unmediated encounter with God expected at the end of time.[102]

Ezekiel's *Merkavah* is of relevance to our study not only because of its role as transitional *locus* of realized eschatology between Temple and eschaton, but also because it constitutes yet another biblical motif tying together the great moments of salvation history by means of connections to the Temple, to Mount Sinai, and back to the Garden of Eden.[103]

The Merkavah *as Moveable Sanctuary*

The correlation between Ezekiel's *Merkavah* and the Temple is well-known. We have mentioned how the four-faced and four-winged cherubim/living creatures of Ezekiel's chariot (Ezek 1:5–11; 9:3; 10:1–22; 11:22) – acting as seat of the divine throne and glory of God (Ezek 1:28; 10:1–4) – play the same role as the winged cherubim in the Temple's Holy of Holies (1 Kgs 6:23–28; 8:6–8; 2 Chr 3:10–13).[104] The *Merkavah* was thus interpreted as "a visionary, mystical

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102 This transformation is already visible in Second Temple apocalyptic literature, and it becomes even more prominent after the destruction of the Second Temple and the rise of *Heikhalot* literature, whose authors use the vision of the chariot as the principal framework of their mystical worldview. Cf. Elior, "From Earthly Temple to Heavenly Shrines," 242; *ibid. The Three Temples*, 31–34.

103 Some of these links are found in Ezekiel itself, while others are developed in the later interpretation of the *Merkavah* motif in Second Temple, rabbinic and *Heikhalot* literature. At this stage of our study, it is obviously not our purpose to even scratch the surface of this vast literary corpus, but only to highlight some of these features tying the *Merkavah* to nuptial symbolism and salvation history.

104 Ezekiel's four cherubim, each having the face of a man, lion, ox, and eagle (Ezek 1:10) and standing upon four wheels (אוֹפַנִּים), also recall the Temple's ten carts supporting the lavers of bronze, each cart being decorated with carved figures of lion, oxen, and cherubim, and resting upon four wheels, "made like a chariot wheel" (כְּמַעֲשֵׂה אוֹפַן הַמֶּרְכָּבָה) (1 Kgs 7:27–37).

transformation of the Holy of Holies, a composite of details from the Temple which expressed the very essence of the sacred precinct."[105] Ezekiel also links realized and future eschatology in identifying the *Merkavah* with the eschatological Temple. This is best attested in the LXX, which describes the return of the divine glory into the eschatological Temple as a "vision of the chariot" (ὅρασις τοῦ ἅρματος) equivalent to the former vision that he saw at the River Kevar (Ezek 43:3).[106]

The Merkavah *as "Echo" of Mount Sinai*

Scholars have also noted numerous parallels between the *Merkavah* and Sinai traditions. These are linked especially by the festival of S*havuot*, which was the liturgical commemoration of the giving of the Torah and the nuptial covenant between heaven and earth, perceived as a "pact or oath of betrothal, matrimony, and sacred conjugality in the supernal worlds."[107] We have seen an example of this commemoration of Sinai in *PRK* 12 (a midrash expounding Exod 19:1–20:26, read during *Shavuot*), which in addition to highlighting the nuptial dimension of the covenant, also underlines the presence of 22,000 chariots like Ezekiel's at Sinai.[108] Yet the correlation between Sinai and Ezekiel's *Merkhavah* well pre-dates the rabbinic homilies for *Shavuot*, for it is already evident in the biblical texts.[109] The similarities between the two theophanies imply that

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105 Elior, *The Three Temples*, 63. *LevR* 2:7–8 identifies the glory of the Temple with the glory of Ezekiel's Merkavah.

106 More mentions of or allusions to Ezekiel's chariot and/or its identification with the heavenly Temple are found in Sir 49:8; 1 En. 14:8–25 (cf. Halperin, *Faces of the Chariot*, 78–82); Rev 4:2–11 (cf. Halperin, *ibid.*, 87–96); *Vita Adae Evae* 25–29; *Apoc. Mos.* 33:1–5 (cf. Halperin 96–103); *Apoc. Ab.* 18 (cf. Halperin 103–113).

107 Elior, *The Three Temples*, 157; cf. 153–64. On the Sinai-Merkavah tradition, cf. also Urbach, "The Traditions about Merkabah Mysticism in the Tannaitic Period" in Urbach, Werblowsky, Wirszubski, eds. *Studies in Mysticism and Religion Presented to Gershom G. Scholem*; Halperin, *The Faces of the Chariot*, 16–19.

108 "The chariots of God (רֶכֶב אֱלֹהִים) are twenty thousand, even thousands of thousands; The Lord is among them as in Sinai, in the Holy Place" (Ps 68:18). Cf. above, p. 324 and Halperin, *Faces of the Chariot*, 141–49. As both Halperin (*ibid.*, 18) and Elior (*The Three Temples*, 154) note, until today the Torah portion read at *Shavuot* is the passage describing the Sinai theophany (Exod 19) while the prophetic reading (*haftarah*) is Ezekiel's vision of the *Merkavah* (cf. *m. Meg.* 3:5; *b. Meg.* 31a–b). Halperin (*ibid.*, 57–58) has also advanced textual arguments showing that LXX Ezek 43:2 establishes a link between Ezekiel's *merkavah* and the chariots that came to Sinai.

109 As summarized by Elior: "Like the Sinai Covenant . . . in which God came down on the mountain 'in a thick cloud' (Exod 19:9) accompanied by 'thunder and lightning and a dense cloud . . . smoke . . . and fire . . . thunder and flaming torches' (Exod 19:16, 18: 20:18) –

Ezekiel's vision is not only a "mystical and visionary metamorphosis of the Holy of Holies in Solomon's Temple" or "heavenly memorialization of the ruined earthly Temple in a heavenly counterpart and an archetypal cosmic model," but also a renewed experience of the Sinai theophany – a mystical metamorphosis of the covenants concluded between heaven and earth (on *Shavuot*) binding sacred time (covenant, oath, seven weeks…) and sacred place (Sinai, Merkavah, Temple, earthly and heavenly Holy of Holies).[110] Thus the God who formed a nuptial covenant with His people at Sinai and dwelt with them in the Jerusalem Temple now continues to make His presence known to them via the *Merkavah* vision, itself a foretaste of the eternal heavenly sanctuary.[111]

The Merkavah, *Creation, and the Garden of Eden*

Levenson notes that the identification of the Temple with the world to come was predictable because both realms are representative of a return of humanity to its idyllic origin. The idea of protology as prefigurement of eschatology indeed became so established that the term "Garden of Eden" came to be known as a synonym for the coming age.[112] Given the association between

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Ezekiel too saw in his vision 'a huge cloud and flashing fire' (Ezek 1:4), 'burning coals of fire… suggestive of torches' as well as 'fire and lightning' (Ezek 1:13–14) and heavenly sounds (1:24–25). Like the vision of 'the God of Israel, under His feet… the likeness of a pavement of sapphire' (Exod 24:10)… – Ezekiel saw 'the semblance of a throne, in appearance like sapphire' (Ezek 1:26) and 'something like sapphire stone… resembling a throne' (Ezek 10:1). Like 'the Presence of the Lord… as a consuming fire' (Exod 24:17), Ezekiel saw… 'the semblance of the Presence of the Lord' as a 'surrounding radiance' (Ezek 1:28). Like the vision described by Moses as "the Lord our God has just shown us His majestic Presence, and we have heard his voice out of the fire' (Deut 5:21), Ezekiel, having seen 'the radiance of the Presence of the Lord' (Ezek 10:4), describes [it]': 'I saw a gleam as of amber – what looked like a fire… and from what appeared as his loins down, I saw what looked like fire, and there was a radiance all about him' (Ezek 1:27)." *The Three Temples*, 156. Cf. also Halperin, *The Faces of the Chariot*, 16–18.

110 Elior, *The Three Temples*, 157. An example of the Sinai-Merkavah correlation in pseudepigraphical texts in found in *Apoc. Ab.* 18, which portrays Abraham's vision of the burning torch passing between the animal pieces (Gen 15:17) as a vision of the *Merkavah* occurring on Mount Horeb. Cf. Halperin, *Faces of the Chariot*, 109–113.

111 As Green (*Keter*, 86) suggests on the development of the merkavah motif: "The merkavah voyager saw himself to be repeating the journey of Moses, who stepped off the mountaintop and entered into the heavenly chambers. The merkavah journey is a way in which the individual repeats the ascent of Moses."

112 "Since both Mount Zion and the coming era were identified with the Garden of Eden, and since the reconstruction of the Temple on Zion was central to the vision of that future

protology and eschatology, it is not surprising that the *merkavah* motif also became associated with creation and paradise.

Wacholder highlights a number of links between Ezekiel's chariot and the Genesis creation account. These include the heavens opening up (Ezek 1:1; cf. Gen 1:1), Ezekiel's repeated used of ואראה (cf. the repeated use of וירא in Gen 1), the רוח, cloud, fire, and brilliant radiance of Ezek 1:4 (which may allude to the רוח hovering over the waters and the creation of light in Gen 1:2–3), Ezekiel's חיות (cf. the חיות mentioned 6 times in Gen 1–2), the רקיע (5 times in Ezek 1:22–26; 10:1; 9 times in Gen 1), and the divine voice (קוֹל) of Ezek 1:24–25, at whose command the world was called into being.[113] The implication is that Ezekiel's vision of the *ma'aseh merkavah* is also an indirect vision of the *ma'aseh bereshit* – not only an encounter with the One who created *ex nihilo* but also an insight into the very design of creation as a reflection of the Creator enthroned in glory upon the *Merkavah*.

Ancient Jewish interpreters located the divine chariot in the primeval Garden of Eden. A good example is the *Apocalypse of Moses* (and its Latin counterpart, the *Life of Adam and Eve*), which sees the eschaton as a return to Eden, where God had already "set up his throne" after Adam and Eve ate of the forbidden fruit (*Apoc. Mos.* 8:1).[114] The picture that emerges from this text is a blurring of the boundary between the earthly Garden of Eden and

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age, it was quite logical to see the names and epithets of the Temple as references to the era of bliss to follow the present." Levenson, *Sinai and Zion*, 182–83.

113 Wacholder, "Creation in Ezekiel's Merkabah: Ezekiel 1 and Genesis 1."

114 The story narrates how Adam falls sick after the expulsion from Eden. He sends Eve and Seth back to paradise to bring him fruit from the tree that "flows with oil" that could heal him (*Apoc. Mos.* 9:3). But the archangel Michael announces that access to the tree will only be renewed at the end of times (13:2–4). Eve recalls how Adam became "alienated from the glory of God" (20:6) because of his sin. God then went up into paradise, "mounted on the chariot of his cherubim" (ἐπὶ ἅρματος Χερουβίμ) to judge him, and "the throne of God was fixed where the Tree of Life was" (22:3–4). After having set the cherubim to guard the entrance to paradise, the Lord promised to Adam and Eve a renewed access to the Tree of Life at the time of the resurrection (28:4). This is the moment when Adam took crocus, nard, calamus and cinnamon, in order to offer sacrifice to God (29:3–6). At the moment of Adam's death, Eve sees "a chariot (ἅρμα) of light, born by four bright eagles, (and) it were impossible for any man born of woman to tell the glory of them or behold their face and angels going before the chariot" (cf. also *Vita Adae Evae* 25:3; Halperin, *Faces of the Chariot*, 96f). As the chariot and its seraphim come to a halt, Eve beholds "golden censers" and "all the angels with censers and frankincense came in haste to the incense-offering and blew upon it and the smoke of the incense veiled the firmaments" (33:2–4). Following this vision of the heavenly liturgy upon the *merkavah*, Adam is taken into "paradise," called "third heaven" (37:5). Yet his body remains "lying upon the

the heavenly paradise – called "third heaven" – with God's chariot and throne seemingly present in both locations. On the one hand, the throne of God and cherubim are situated by the earthly Tree of Life (eschaton anticipated in protology). On the other hand, the same throne and chariot are in heaven, receiving the souls of the deceased (realized eschatology now). Finally, a general return of humanity to the earthly Tree of Life is expected after the resurrection (final eschatology).[115]

To sum up, the *Merkavah* was not only a manifestation of anticipated/realized eschatology. It also provided a conceptual, spiritual access to the heavenly Holy of Holies – even when the earthly sanctuary was no longer in existence. It offered faithful Jews the opportunity to mystically experience anew the Sinai theophany, celebrated at *Shavuot* as the betrothal between God and Israel. It even transported the believer back to the Garden of Eden at the dawn of creation, which was identified with the heavenly world to come. Thus, the *Merkavah* provided ancient Jews with a theological framework grounded in salvation history in which they could mystically experience the spiritual marriage with God, where protology was joined with eschatology.

7.2.4.3 Sanctuary in Exile: Towards an "Anthropological Eschatology" *Community as Temple*

The awesome mystical vision of the *Merkavah* was perhaps a bit much for the average pious Jew. Fortunately for the common mortals – for whom lofty visionary metamorphoses were out of reach – the *Merkavah* was not the only means of communion with God. Ezekiel had also spoken of a "sanctuary in exile," i.e. that the Lord would be a "little sanctuary" (מִקְדָּשׁ מְעַט) for Israel in the countries in which they were scattered (Ezek 11:16). The prophet thus announces

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earth in paradise" and he is buried there after being told that he will be transformed again to his former glory (39:1–2; 40:6).

115 Cf. the correlation between Eden, eschaton and Temple in 1 En. 24:1–25:7, where Enoch is shown the Tree of Life on a magnificient mountain whose summit is "like the throne of God." The fruit of the tree is inaccessible until the final judgment and consummation of time when it will be "given to the righteous and holy. Its fruit shall be for food to the elect: it shall be transplanted to the holy place, to the temple of the Lord, the Eternal King" (1 En. 25:5). The protology-eschatology correlation is also found in *T. Levi.*, which portrays heaven as a temple (3:4–8; 5:1) and announces that at the time of the messianic priest "the heavens shall be opened, and from the temple of glory shall come upon him sanctification." This priest will "open the gates of paradise, and shall remove the threatening sword against Adam. And he shall give to the saints to eat from the tree of life, and the spirit of holiness shall be on them" (18:6, 10–11; cf. Briggs, *Jewish Temple Imagery*, 128–131). Cf. Rev 22:1–3 (above, p. 263).

not only the future building of his eschatological Temple (Ezek 40–48) but also the edification of an *anthropological Temple* when the Lord would give a "new heart" to Israel and put His own Spirit within them (Ezek 36:26–27). Ezekiel uses strong Temple language to describe this eternal covenant by which God would establish his sanctuary among his people.[116]

In this sense, also, Ezekiel is revolutionary, because he paves the way for the concept of the community of believers as anthropic Temple that will become characteristic of the Dead Sea sect and of Paul.[117] This is another form of realized eschatology, one that we might designate as "anthropological eschatology." It is a transitional, mystical state between Temple and eschaton, the anticipated experience *now* in the life of the community of that glorious communion with the Lord that was previously dependent upon the physical Temple and is still to be fully disclosed at the end of time.

Man as Temple and Microcosm

The idea of the community as Temple finds its logical progression in the concept of the individual believer as Temple. This reflects a process of gradual personalization and "contraction" of the seat of the divine presence, going from the Temple building, to the community of the elect, to the heart of the

116 "I will make a covenant of peace with them, and it shall be an everlasting covenant with them; I will establish them and multiply them, and I will set My sanctuary (מִקְדָּשִׁי) in their midst forevermore. My tabernacle (מִשְׁכָּנִי) also shall be with them; indeed I will be their God, and they shall be My people. The nations also will know that I, the LORD, sanctify Israel (מְקַדֵּשׁ אֶת-יִשְׂרָאֵל), when My sanctuary (מִקְדָּשִׁי) is in their midst forevermore" (Ezek 37:26–28). Cf. also Ezek 43:7: "My name shall dwell (אֶשְׁכָּן / κατασκηνώσει) in the midst of the house of Israel forever." Other post-exilic prophets refer to God's promise of returning to dwell among His people in Zion, sanctifying them in a Temple not built by human hands: "So you shall know that I am the LORD your God, dwelling (שֹׁכֵן / κατασκηνῶν) in Zion My holy mountain. Then Jerusalem shall be holy" (Joel 3:17). "Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion! For behold, I am coming and I will dwell (וְשָׁכַנְתִּי / κατασκηνώσω) in your midst" (Zech 2:10).

117 Proponents of the idea take on various attitudes towards the physical Temple: In some cases, the anthropic Temple is seen as complementing the Temple structure and coexisting alongside it; in others, it competes against it (when the Temple service was deemed corrupt and illegitimate, e.g. in Jubilees, Qumran); while in yet other cases, the anthropic Temple outright replaces and supersedes the Temple. On the community as Temple, cf. 1QS 8:4–9; 9:3–7; 11:8; 4QFlor 1:6; 1 Cor 3:16–17; 6:19; 2 Cor 6:16; Eph 2:21; 4 Ezra 9:38–10:54 (above, p. 280). Cf. Gärtner, *The Temple and the Community in Qumran and the New Testament*, 16–46; McKelvey, *The New Temple*, 46–53; Kerr, *The Temple of Jesus' Body*, 54–57; 296–98; Coloe, *God Dwells With Us*, 167–171; Corriveau, "Temple, Holiness, and the Liturgy of Life in Corinthians," 149; Briggs, *Jewish Temple Imagery*, 147–190.

believer. The identification *man* = *temple* eventually became combined with the known *temple* = *microcosm* symbolism, resulting in the equation *man* = *temple* = *microcosm*. These ideas begin to emerge in Second Temple writings, come to fruition in Philo and Paul, and become quite detailed and explicit in later rabbinic writings.[118]

We have encounted an example of man as representative of the Temple, of Israel, and of all humanity in Ben Sira's high priest (Sir 50), who "incarnates" the Wisdom described in Sir 24. We have also seen that for Philo, the Temple is a shadow of the visible cosmos, which in turn is a shadow of incorporeal reality, and the *Logos* is high priest of the temple of the cosmos.[119] Yet the Alexandrian does not limit the role of priesthood and sanctuary to Israel's high priest; he also extends it to every person, explaining that man was made to be "an abode or sacred temple for a reasonable soul."[120] Elsewhere, Philo depicts the rational soul as a Temple, and man as the priest who ministers within his own anthropic sanctuary and represents the universe.[121] This shows that for Philo, a person and the universe indeed participate in a "micro-macrocosmic" relationship.[122] When one considers this alongside Philo's nuptial symbolism,

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118 E.g.: "The Temple corresponds to the whole world and to the creation of man who is a small world." (*Midrash Tanhuma*, Pequde 3). For more examples, see Patai, *Man and Temple*, 113–17; McKelvey, *The New Temple*, 53–55.

119 *De vita Mosis* 2:102–105; 117–124 (cf. above, p. 379); Briggs, *Jewish Temple Imagery*, 206–207.

120 *De op. mundi* 137. On Philo's Logos, cf. Barker, *The Gate of Heaven*, 115–118.

121 "For there are, as it seems, two temples belonging to God; one being this world, in which the high priest is the divine Logos, his own firstborn son. The other is the rational soul, the priest of which is the real true man, the copy of whom, perceptible to the senses, is he who performs his paternal vows and sacrifices, to whom it is enjoined to put on the aforesaid tunic, the representation of the universal heaven, in order that the world may join with the man in offering sacrifice, and that the man may likewise co-operate with the universe" (*De somniis* 1:215). Elsewhere, Philo explains that the Temple of the soul, called the "earthly habitation of the invisible God" is to be prepared for the divinity's indwelling through knowledge and the virtues: "Since, therefore, he invisibly enters into this region of the soul, let us prepare that place in the best way the case admits of, to be an abode worthy of God . . . what sort of habitation ought we to prepare for the King of kings, for God the ruler of the whole universe . . . we call the invisible soul the terrestrial habitation of the invisible God . . . but that the house may be firm and beautiful, let a good disposition and knowledge be laid as its foundations, and on these foundations let the virtues be built up in union with good actions" (*De cherub.* 98–101).

122 This motif resurfaces in a number of other texts. In 2 En. 30:8–10, 13, a midrash on the creation of man, Adam's identification with the universe is seen in his being formed out of seven elements of nature: his flesh from the earth, his blood from the dew, his eyes from the sun, his bones from stone, his intelligence from the swiftness of the angels and from

where God joins Himself to men via His surrogate Wisdom, one arrives at a convincing anthropological and mystical version of the (human) Holy of Holies as nuptial chamber.

We have observed a remarkable transformation of the eschatological motif, from the hope of the prophets for the future reign of God on earth, to the dramatic breaking forth in time of the divine Presence in Ezekiel's *merkavah*, to the imparting of the same presence to the believing community, to its mystical infusion into the soul of the devout believer. At every stage, it seems, the eschaton "draws nearer" to man. One might say that the eschatological perspective between the time of the prophets and the late Second Temple period becomes progressively less distant and more present – going from a future to a realized, anthropological eschatology.[123] From there, it is but a small step to arrive at the Christological and ecclesiological nuptial theology of the New Testament.

7.3 Nuptial Theology at Four Key Moments in Early Christianity

We now bring our study to a close with a brief review of the early Christian reinterpretation, in the NT and early Pseudepigrapha, of the Jewish Motifs described above.[124]

7.3.1 *Mystical Marriage as Return to the Origins: Adam, Eve, and Eden*

7.3.1.1 In the New Testament

The mystical marriage between Christ and the Church often displays close ties with Adam-Eve or Eden typology. In the Johannine and Pauline writings, nuptial texts allude to the narrative of Genesis 1–3, portraying Christ as a "new Adam" who restores the damage incurred by the first Adam's sin, and the Church, Christ's spouse and mother of all believers, as new Eve. In the Fourth Gospel, nuptial symbolism is introduced by the sequence of seven days of the new creation culminating in the wedding at Cana where Jesus as "new Adam"

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cloud, his veins and his hair from the grass of the earth, and his soul from God's breath. In Sib. Or. 3:24–26, Adam "completes in his name morn and dusk, antarctic and arctic." Cf. Scroggs, *The Last Adam*, 113–14.

123 Of course, this transformation process should not be oversimplified: the traditional eschatological hope for the establishment of God's kingdom on earth at the end of human history is still present in Second Temple literature, and it makes a strong comeback in rabbinic writings.

124 For the sake of consistency with chapter 5, I will include here all pseudepigraphical texts studied, including *Joseph and Aseneth* and *Fourth Ezra*, although these are most probably Jewish texts.

addresses his mother as "woman" – hinting at Gen 3:15. The imagery is unveiled at Jesus' "hour" when the new Adam manifests his glory by overcoming temptation in a garden (in contrast to Adam in the garden), and the "woman" turns out to be a new Eve, representative mother-figure of the community of disciples. At the "hour" of his death, the bridegroom-Messiah sacramentally gives birth to the Church in the pouring of water and blood out of his side. For Paul too, Christ is the new Adam and the Church is the new Eve. Their marriage is a "one-flesh" union, fulfilling Gen 2:24 and the perfect model to follow for baptized couples. The nuptial-Eden connection culminates in the Apocalypse with the return of the "woman," whose struggle with the serpent evokes Gen 3:15, and who prefigures the New Jerusalem's marriage with the Lamb, leading to a definitive return of mankind to the Tree of Life.

7.3.1.2 In the Pseudepigrapha

The marriage-Eden correlation continues in pseudepigraphical writings. We recall the fruit trees and spring of water in the courtyard surrounding Aseneth's dwelling – with her nuptial chamber at its center – and the honey of immortality made by the bees of the paradise of delight that she eats prior to her union with Joseph, transforming her into a living paradise. Also in the *Odes of Solomon* the believer is metamorphosed into a paradise by means of a sacred kiss. In *4 Ezra*, the *Shepherd of Hermas* and *2 Clement*, nuptiality is connected to protology by an emphasis on the pre-existence of the people of God: in 4 Ezra the ancient origin of Zion is described through the metaphor of the weeping woman who lost her son; in the *Shepherd*, the Church's depiction as a very old woman means that she existed since the beginning of creation; and in *2 Clement*, the union of Christ and the Church (also pre-existent) is identified with the first man and woman in Genesis.

7.3.2 *The Paschal Mystery as* (*Nuptial*) *Redemptive Event*

7.3.2.1 In the New Testament: New Passover, New Sinai, New Exodus

NT nuptial imagery is closely related to Passover, Exodus and Sinai typology. The new wine provided by the bridegroom-Messiah is a sign of the divine covenant and of the Torah. In John, the framing of the seven days leading to Cana – matching the same pattern of days leading to the Sinai theophany – indicates that the Messiah has come to make a new Sinai-like nuptial covenant with his people. The idea is supported by the allusion to Jacob's ladder, Mary's words echoing Israel's declaration at Sinai, and the revelation of Jesus' glory manifesting the divine glory. At the same time, the new nuptial covenant is inseparable from Christ's redemptive sacrifice for his bride. It is sealed by Jesus' death as paschal "Lamb of God," when Israel was commemorating the Exodus and

the Passover lambs were being slaughtered in the Temple.[125] Pauline nuptial imagery is also rooted in Christ's sacrificial death, which reenacts and fulfills the Passover sacrifice. It is through the paschal mystery that Jesus becomes the NT bridegroom and grants the "right" to the Church to become his bride. Other notable Pauline typological reinterpretations of the Sinai and Exodus motifs include the "sacramentality" of the manna and water in the desert as foreshadows of baptism and the Eucharist, the identification of the rock as Christ, and the contrast between the glory of the Old and New covenants. We have also noted the extensive Passover and Exodus typology in the Apocalypse.

7.3.2.2 In the Pseudepigrapha: Incarnation, Atoning Death, and Sacred Kiss

Our pseudepigraphical texts also tie nuptial symbolism to one central redemptive event. For a Jewish work like 4 Ezra, this event is evidently the Sinai theophany. In the mystical *Joseph and Aseneth*, it is Joseph's "soteriological embrace" with his bride. Apocryphal Christian texts usually bypass the OT history of Israel but base their nuptial imagery in Christ's self-sacrifice. The *Odes of Solomon* emphasize the Incarnation and crucifixion – the Beloved becoming man and dying to share His life with humans by means of a sacred kiss. In the *Shepherd of Hermas*, grace and the virtues are imparted to believers in a spiritual union with 12 virgins who are "holy spirits"and the "powers of the Son of God" who purged their sins through his sufferings. Also for *2 Clement*, the nuptial union between Christ and the Church is rooted in Jesus' salvation accomplished by his incarnation and suffering.

7.3.3 *Bridegroom, Bride, and New Temple*

7.3.3.1 In the New Testament

The marriage between Christ and the Church is extended liturgically and mystically, either by means of associations with Temple and sacrificial typology, or via the theme of the divine glory (כְּבוֹד-ה׳). Christ's love for his bride is actualized on two levels: ecclesially, in the Church, and mystically in the body and soul of the believer. The nuptial metaphor thus represents on the one hand the union between the divine bridegroom and his people as bridal ecclesial community, and on the other hand a mystical union between Christ and the baptized believer who is a Temple of the Holy Spirit. The mystical marriage is anchored in history, connecting the present with both past and future:

125 Notwithstanding the discrepancy between the synoptics and John as to the exact relation of the Last Supper to the Passover Seder. Cf. Matt 26:17–29; John 13:1; 19:14; 1 Cor 5:7; 1 Cor 10 (associating Christ and the Eucharist with the desert wanderings); Rev 5:6.

it commemorates the one-time redemptive event (the Paschal sacrifice) by making it present liturgically and sacramentally in the human tabernacle through baptism and the Eucharist. At the same time, the union with Christ anticipates the eschatological fulfillment of the wedding either at the time of death or at the end of time.

7.3.3.2 In the Pseudepigrapha

In pseudepigraphical texts, believers also partake in the nuptial union via a cultic experience inspired by Temple worship. This experience is either ecclesial, involving the community, or mystical, involving the individual. The first three texts emphasize the mystical aspect. In *Joseph and Aseneth*, Aseneth plays the role of a priestess and her luxurious dwelling bears the major features of ancient temples, even evoking Ezekiel's eschatological Temple. She leaves this sanctuary of idolatry to be joined with Joseph in the "heavenly bridal chamber" and to partake of a life-giving meal consisting of the "bread of life" and "cup of immortality." In the *Odes of Solomon*, the believer is joined to the Beloved by means of a sacred kiss imparting the living waters of the Holy Spirit in the sanctuary – which is also a "bridal chamber" – so that the believer may offer spiritual sacrifices in return. By contrast, the next three texts place more importance upon the "ecclesial" aspect of nuptial symbolism. *Fourth Ezra* portrays the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple as Mother-Zion's son dying in the wedding chamber. In the *Shepherd of Hermas*, the Church is both a great tower and a pure and spotless virgin adorned as if in a bridal chamber. And for *2 Clement*, following St. Paul, believers who profane the body through sexual immorality also corrupt the Church, in an action that is tantamount to defiling the Temple of God.

7.3.4 *Eschatological Wedding in the Heavenly Temple*

7.3.4.1 In the New Testament

The mystical marriage is not only past (linked to Christ's sacrifice) and present (ecclesially or mystically); it also awaits its eschatological fulfillment in the glorious wedding between Christ and his ecclesial bride. For Paul, the virgin-Church betrothed to Christ lives "between the times," in a moment that is "already but not yet," in frail tabernacles that long to find their permanent home in the eternal building of God. In the Apocalypse, the betrothal between Christ and the Church, sealed by the sacrificial death of the Lamb, reaches its eschatological consummation in the heavenly Temple – which is also a return to the idyllic, primeval state of Eden and a renewed access to the lost Tree of Life.

7.3.4.2 In the Pseudepigrapha

The eschatological perspective is also present in various forms in the pseudepigraphical texts. *Joseph and Aseneth* uses apocalyptic imagery reminiscent of the Apocalypse, and perhaps the romance between the two protagonists could be viewed as a metaphor expressing the hope that one day, like Aseneth, the pagan nations will forsake their idolatry and embrace the God of Israel – represented by Joseph. Eschatology in the *Odes of Solomon* is anthropological, expressed in the form of the individual's hope for immortality and restoration to divine glory. *Fourth Ezra's* eschatology is conventional and in continuity with the prophets, hoping for a restoration of mother-Zion, the earthly Jerusalem, to its former glory. The *Shepherd of Hermas* envisages a restored eschatological Church as a pure and glorious virgin; and *2 Clement* refers to Isaiah's prophecy of the barren woman turned fruitful to describe the Church who is looking forward to life everlasting in the kingdom to come.

CHAPTER 8

Conclusion and Epilogue

8.1 Synopsis

8.1.1 *Ancient Jewish Nuptial Theology: Synopsis*

Our study of the marriage between YHWH and Israel in early Jewish thought has revealed that, despite the diversity of sources, it has developed in a fairly consistent way within the framework of four "moments" of salvation history:

1. Idyllic "prototype" of the marriage (Creation/Eden): the marriage covenant is established between God and humanity through Adam and Eve, but damaged through their sin.
2. Redemptive covenantal event (Sinai): God's marriage with Israel is intended to renew and repair God's covenant with creation and bring it back to its original state.
3. Liturgical extension/actualization of the covenant (Temple/Zion): the Temple worship commemorates over time the marriage formed at Sinai and anticipates its eschatological fulfillment.
4. Eschatological consummation of the mystical marriage: the ultimate fulfillment of the process of redemption (Messianic Age/eschaton).

8.1.2 *Early Christian Nuptial Theology: Synopsis*

The early Christian authors created and developed their Christian nuptial theology in full continuity with their Jewish predecessors and contemporaries, adopting the same framework of salvation history inherited from them. Despite the unique character and particularities of each text, one cannot deny a remarkable inner coherence in the NT's overall nuptial theology in its fourfold typological reinterpretation of the four OT "moments":

1. NT nuptial symbolism finds its prototype and model in the central OT themes of:

(a) Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden;
(b) The covenantal bond between YHWH and Israel established at Mount Sinai;
(c) The actualization and perpetualization of the covenant in the Temple;
(d) The eschatological hope of the prophets.

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2. The roles of bridegroom and Temple are allegorically reapplied to Jesus by means of Christological typology (esp. Gospels);
3. The roles of bride and Temple of the Holy Spirit are tropologically applied to the Church and the believer by means of ecclesiological typology (esp. Pauline epistles);
4. The marriage between Christ and the Church reaches its consummation in the eternal heavenly Temple by means of eschatological typology (esp. Revelation).

The reinterpretation of the four nuptial "moments" by the NT authors could be schematically summarized in the following way:

Primary Source	**OT Narrative**	**Gospel of John**	**Pauline Epistles**	**Revelation**
Fulfillment:		Messianic Age	"Worship in spirit & truth"	Eschatological Wedding
Primary Figure(s):	Israel	Jesus	The Church/ believer	Christ & Church
Primary Typology:	Historical	Christological	Ecclesiological	Eschatological
Interpretation of OT:	Literal	Allegorical	Tropological	Anagogical
Four Nuptial Moments: (Main emphasis)				
1. **Ideal Prototype: (*Urzeit* Marriage)**	Adam & Eve/ Garden of Eden	Jesus = New Adam	Christ = New Adam Church = New Eve	Tree of Life "Woman" of Gen 3:15
2. **Redemptive Event: (nuptial covenant)**	Exodus/Sinai	Jesus = Passover Lamb; bridegroom	New Exodus; bride & betrothal; baptism	Paschal Lamb/ New Exodus
3. **Liturgical Extension into Time:**	Zion/Temple	Jesus, disciples = New Temple	Believer/Church = Temple of Holy Spirit	Heavenly Temple/ New Jerusalem
4. **Eschatological Fulfillment:**	Hope of Messianic age/ wedding	Worship in spirit & truth	Hope of eschatological wedding	Marriage Supper of the Lamb

8.2 A Foundation for the Patristic Interpretation of the Song of Songs?

This schema is striking in that it seems to anticipate the four-fold framework of interpretation of Scripture that was later developed by the Church Fathers. The typological treatment of the mystical marriage by the NT authors, allegorically applied to Christ, tropologically applied to the Church and to the believer, and eschatologically projected into the world to come, roughly corresponds to the classic "four senses of Scripture" that became the standard pattern for the medieval exegesis of Scripture.[1] It is precisely this interpretive framework which guided the interpretation of the Song of Songs from late Antiquity up to the beginning of the Modern Age.[2]

What is the known historical background to the Christian interpretation of the Canticle? Although Christianity inherited the nuptial metaphor from Jewish tradition, and Jewish midrashim on the Song of Solomon certainly circulated, at least in oral form, long before the first patristic works, complete Christian allegorical expositions of the Canticle actually appeared earlier than their Jewish counterparts. The earliest extant work was written by Hippolytus of Rome (d. 235), who took a salvation-historical approach and interpreted the Song as a prophecy announcing the end of the 'old' covenant and the beginning of the 'new,' where the Church replaces Israel as God's bride.[3] A few years later, Origen wrote his influential ten-volume commentary on the Song (along with two homilies) which would become the foundational text for the great patristic and medieval commentators on the Canticle that followed him. Origen's commentary is important because it testifies to the previous existence of Jewish allegorical exegesis – both historical and mystical – on the Song, and of a lively Judeo-Christian debate on this allegorical exegesis already in the third century.[4] Origen was also familiar with the Jewish custom not to teach young students about the creation account of Genesis, the treatment of the *merkavah* in the first chapters of Ezekiel, the building of the eschatological Temple at the end of the same book, and the Book of Canticles. As Scholem has noted, the shroud of secrecy that surrounded those passages points to

1 On the development of the senses of Scripture in the early Church, see Jean Daniélou, "Les divers sens de l'Écriture dans la tradition Chrétienne primitive" [*ETL* 24 (1948)] pp. 118–126. For a fuller treatment, the best work remains Henri de Lubac's *Exégèse Médiévale – Les quatre sens de l'Écriture*.

2 For studies on the medieval interpretation of the Canticle, cf. Matter, *The Voice of My Beloved*; Astell, *The Song of Songs in the Middle Ages*.

3 Only fragments of Hippolytus' commentary have survived. Cf. Murphy, *The Song of Songs*, 14–15; Pope, *Song of Songs*, 114.

4 Cf. above, pp. 44–45.

the interconnectedness of their themes and their association with an early esoteric tradition that was considered unsuitable for the uninitiated.[5]

Origen was the first to systematize the allegorical interpretation of the Bible, a technique particularly apparent in his treatment of the Song of Songs. On the basis that the visible world reveals the invisible, the corporeal the incorporeal, and the earthly the heavenly, he argued that the same principle applied to Scripture. He attributed the Platonic tripartite anthropology of body, soul and spirit to the Word of God, which he saw as a kind of incarnation of the Holy Spirit. To him the carnal sense of the Canticle was its literal meaning – a lofty human love song; the spiritual sense revealed the mystical nuptials of Christ and the Church; and the psychic sense referred to the bridal union of the Logos and the human soul.[6]

Following Origen, other early Christian writers hammered out various theories of allegorical interpretation of Scripture, but none of these became particularly influential nor accepted for widespread practice[7] until the fifth-century emergence of a model that became the standard of medieval exegesis and classical framework for the Christian interpretation of the Canticle. This model, first expressed by John Cassian, distinguished four levels of interpretation in the Scriptures (the first three of which roughly correspond to Origen's three senses):

1. Literal sense: the historical meaning conveyed by the "letter" of the text (OT types);
2. Allegorical sense: the typological application of the OT events to Christ and the Church;
3. Tropological sense: the mystagogical and moral application of these OT types to the life of the Christian (especially through the liturgy and sacraments);
4. Anagogical sense: the OT types viewed in terms of their eschatological significance.[8]

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5 Origen, *The Song of Songs* (Lawson), 23; cf. Urbach, "The Homiletical Interpretations," 252; Scholem, *Jewish Gnosticism, Merkabah Mysticism, and Talmudic Tradition*, 36–42.

6 Origen, *The Song of Songs*, (Lawson), 9–10, 223. On Origen's commentary and homilies see Pope, *Song of Songs*, 114–117; Murphy, *The Song of Songs*, 16–21; King, *Origen on the Song of Songs as the Spirit of Scripture*.

7 Augustine, for example, identified four levels of meaning in the biblical text in his treatise *De utilitate credendi*: the historical, etiological, analogical, and allegorical. *De utilitate credendi*, III. 5. ed. J. Zycham, CSEL 25 (1891), 7–8; cf. Matter, *The Voice of My Beloved*, 53.

8 Cassian's original form of this exegetical model referred to the interpretation of the word "Jerusalem", which was understood in four ways: "according to history the city of the Jews, according to allegory the Church of Christ, according to anagogy that celestial city of

Our study has shown that Cassian was hardly an innovator, for his pattern of interpretation is already visible in the NT authors' treatment of the marriage between Christ and the Church, inspired by Jewish interpretations of the OT.[9] This sheds light upon our understanding of the early Jewish and Christian allegorical interpretation of Scripture: the inter-relationship of these motifs in the NT could well have constituted an early interpretive framework of Biblical interpretation that was either consciously or intuitively adopted by the Church Fathers, and a prototype and precursor to what later became the medieval "four senses of Scripture."

8.3 Epilogue: From Nuptial Symbolism to Real Marriage

We conclude our study with a practical question: can our treatment of nuptial *symbolism* in ancient Judaism and early Christianity shed light on the nature of *real* marriage in our own day and age? Are there any lessons to be learned from the typological model of marriage that originated at the dawn of creation in the Garden of Eden, was wounded by sin, was redeemed by a great salvific event, is perpetuated through cultic worship in realms of sacred time and space, and is to continue until the final redemption at the end of days? Does this vision of marriage still bear any relevance for citizens of the world in the twenty-first century?

We will address this question from three perspectives: first, from a traditional Jewish view; second, from a (secular) feminist approach, and third, from a Catholic "new feminist" perspective.

8.3.1 *Marriage: A Traditional Jewish View*

The traditional Jewish view of marriage embraces many of the ideas that we have observed in our study. The institution of matrimony is, of course,

God, which is the mother of us all, according to tropology the human soul." John Cassian, *Collationes* 2.XIV.8, *SC* 54, ed. E. Pichery (Paris, 1958), 190, quoted in Matter, *The Voice of My Beloved*, 54. The quadripartite model was eventually encapsulated in the following dictum attributed to Nicholas of Lyra: "*Littera gesta docet, quid credas allegoria, Moralis quid agas, quo tendas anagogia*" ("The letter teaches events, allegory what you should believe, morality teaches what you should do, anagogy what mark you should be aiming for"); cf. De Lubac, *Exégèse Médiévale*, 1:23. This interpretive model remains the standard one accepted by the Catholic Church today. Cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 115–118.

9 De Lubac (*Medieval Exegesis*, 2:4) has shown that when Church Fathers developed the spiritual/allegorical interpretation of Scripture, they saw themselves not as innovators but merely as followers of Paul: "Christian allegory comes from Saint Paul."

fundamental to Judaism. Even though – oddly enough – there is no explicit commandment to marry anywhere in Scripture, the duty to procreate is so primordial for the survival and propagation of the Jewish nation that it is a holy obligation imposed upon every individual and upon the whole community.[10] Yet procreation is not the only reason for marriage, as Rubenstein explains:

> In traditional Judaism marriage has two fundamental purposes, procreation and the satisfaction made possible by the marital relationship. This satisfaction does not derive from the sexual relationship alone; companionship and intimacy, the sharing of life together, are also a profound source of satisfaction even when the difficulties and tragedies of life are shared.[11]

The obligation to marry translates in mutual responsibilities and benefits for both husband and wife. The man who does not have a wife "lives without joy, without blessing, and without goodness" and is even "not a proper man."[12] He should "always observe the honor due to his wife, because blessings rest on a man's home only on account of his wife."[13]

Despite the Scriptural absence of a commandment to marry, the basis for the two fundamental purposes of marriage, union and procreation, originates in the first two chapters of Genesis.[14] Indeed, according to the traditional Jewish view, marriage is called to emulate the joy that Adam and Eve experienced in the Garden of Eden. The importance of marital pleasure and joy, along with the connection to Eden, is affirmed in the Seven Blessings that are recited at every marriage ceremony:

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10 Cf. Kiddushin 29a: "What are the essential duties of father to son? . . . to circumcise, redeem, teach him Torah, take a wife for him, and teach him a craft." Hence the concept of consecrated celibacy as an ideal is largely foreign to Judaism, though there may be some rare exceptions to this rule for those who are exceptionally dedicated to the study of Torah: "Whosever's soul craves Torah constantly . . . and clings to [Torah] his whole life, thus neglecting to marry, *ein be-yado avon* (he bears no sin)." Rambam, *Hilkhot Ishut* 15:3 as quoted in Lichtenstein, "Of Marriage," 13.).

11 Rubenstein, "Marriage and the Family in Jewish Tradition," 10.

12 *B. Yebam.* 62b–63a.

13 *B. Baba Metzi'a* 59a.

14 Procreation is mandated by the commandment to "be fruitful and multiply" (Gen 1:27), and nuptial union and intimacy are seen in the purpose behind the creation of the woman: "it is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him . . . Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and clings to his wife, and they become one flesh" (Gen 2:18, 24). Cf. Greenberg, "Marriage in the Jewish Tradition," 3–4.

> Grant perfect joy to these loving companions, as you did your creations in the Garden of Eden. Blessed are You, LORD, who grants the joy of groom and bride.[15]

In addition, marriage is not "a contractual, biological, or sexual union alone, nor even the ability to unite in bringing forth children; it is an *ultimate, transcendental unity*. The goal of marriage is to create the Godly unity of man and woman."[16] Stolper underlines the theological and mystical connection between every Jewish couple, on the one hand, and Adam and Eve on the other:

> In essence every man is a potential Adam and every woman is a potential Eve – their story is the story of all of mankind, their origin represents the origin of each married couple.[17]

Traditional Judaism holds that each human must find a mate "in order to recapture some of the essence of paradise." The Jewish wedding, then, "liturgically dramatizes this 'finding of the helpmate' in the 'Garden of Eden,' which is represented by the enclosure of the *chuppah*/canopy."[18] Stolper adds that the meaning of the marriage ceremony – as expressed in its third blessing recalling God's creation of *ha-adam*[19] – refers to the act of (re-)creating man and woman into the original unity of *ha-adam* "which bears the potential of becoming the *tzelem elokim* [the image of God]."

> Every wedding restores the bride and groom to the unified state of Adam and Eve, enabling two halves to find their missing half and become whole again. Every wedding resummons the theme of the marriage ceremony blessing, 'Gladden the bride and groom as you gladdened your creation in the primeval Garden of Eden.'[20]

But is it enough for a married couple to draw inspiration from the utopic memory of a long-lost paradise in order to overcome the real tensions and challenges of life? Probably not. They must also be genuinely committed to

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15 *B. Ketub.* 7b–8a; cf.Rubenstein, "Marriage and the Family in Jewish Tradition," 11.

16 Stolper, "The Man-Woman Dynamic of Ha-Adam," 36.

17 Stolper, "The Man-Woman Dynamic of Ha-Adam," 36.

18 Bronstein, "Theology and Ritual of Jewish Marriage Rites," 38.

19 "Blessed are You, LORD, our God, sovereign of the universe, who creates man (יוצר האדם)" (*B. Ketub.* 7b–8a).

20 Stolper, "The Man-Woman Dynamic of Ha-Adam," 39.

fulfill their mutual responsibilities as the tangible expression of the covenantal relationship that they sealed on their wedding day. The Jewish wedding promotes this idea by dramatizing the Sinai revelation and betrothal between God and Israel. As Chabad states in *A Guide to the Jewish Wedding*, "on the cosmic level, our sages teach us that each marriage ceremony is a reenactment of the marriage between G-d and the Jewish people that took place at Mount Sinai." This is seen in the *kiddushin* – the "sanctification" – when the bridegroom places the wedding ring on his bride's finger and declares to her "with this ring, you are consecrated to me according to the Torah of Moses and Israel." By this act, just as Israel became the Lord's "own possession (סְגֻלָּה) among all peoples" (Exod 19:5), the wife is "acquired," so to speak, becoming her husband's "possession" henceforth off-limits to all others.[21] The Sinai dramatization continues with the public reading of the *ketubah* – the nuptial contract detailing the husband's obligations to his wife that serves as symbolic "Torah," which he then gives to her.[22] As Bronstein illustrates, symbolically,

> the couple are standing at Sinai itself. They, like Moses, experience God's mystical presence by encountering the godly image in one another. Standing together under the canopy, they are, as it were, at the mountaintop, isolated from the rest of the gathering . . . In the course of the ceremony the partners are charged to translate the mystery of their brief stay at the mountaintop into a practical formula for living together . . . Thus, as the partners conclude their fleeting emotional and spiritual experience of the wedding service, they leave the scene of the wedding with something in hand, something symbolic of the tablets that represent the social contract called 'Torah.'

In light of these Sinai allusions, the festive wedding banquet that concludes the covenantal celebration between bridegroom and bride is evocative of the

21 "Although marriage in Judaism is in no sense a sacrament, it is *kiddushin*, the sacred relationship whereby the wife is consecrated to her husband and absolutely forbidden to all others for the duration of the marriage. Nevertheless, although the husband acquires rights over his wife's *ishut* (wifehood), he acquires none over her person." (Rubenstein 11; cf. *b. Qiddushin* 2a–b).

22 According to Chabad (*A Guide to the Jewish Wedding*), "the ketubah document is reminiscent of the wedding between G-d and Israel when Moses took the Torah, the 'Book of the Covenant,' and read it to the Jews prior to the 'chupah ceremony' at Mount Sinai. In the Torah, G-d, the groom, undertakes to provide for all the physical and spiritual needs of His beloved bride."

covenantal feast that took place on Mount Sinai after the sealing of the covenant between God and Israel (Exod 24:9–11).

After the wedding celebration is over, the couple set out on their journey together, sanctifying their common life and home by fulfilling their obligations in the midst of daily challenges and trials. Like the relationship between God and Israel, the relationship between husband and wife in a traditional Jewish marriage is not established on modern egalitarian principles. Jewish marriage is based, rather, on a principle of complementarity according to which each party plays a vital yet distinct role: while the husband must support his wife financially, provide her food and clothing and attend to her conjugal rights, the wife is responsible for running the home and raising the children.[23]

Now that husband and wife have become one, re-creating in their complementarity the *adam* that reflects the divine image, the two become "so appropriately matched that they create a home which evolves into a miniature sanctuary."[24] Ideally, this is to be reflected in all their activities, from the most mundane to the most intimate. Indeed, the one-flesh union bears such sanctity that it is closely associated with the Sabbath: "relations on the holiest day of the week are not only permitted but encouraged, as 'marital relations are part of the Sabbath delight.'"[25]

And yet the ideal inevitably faces the hardships of reality. As much as earthly marriage may catch a glimpse of the lost bliss of Eden and seek to relive the covenantal bond of Sinai in the sanctuary of the family home, the couple also tastes the drama of Adam and Eve's expulsion – and Israel's exile – through the vicissitudes of marriage in a fallen world. This is already symbolically anticipated when the groom smashes a glass with his heel at the wedding ceremony, a custom that is generally associated with the destruction of the Temple and the subsequent "brokenness" of the Jewish people. As Bronstein notes,

> Many Jewish couples are told at this point in the ceremony that happiness for them cannot be complete until national – even universal – redemption is complete. In this way, even the paradise of marriage cannot give the lovers the complete redemption they seek. Yet their personal covenant of devotion will go a long way toward bringing about the larger redemption in which their own marriage will play a prominent role.[26]

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23 Cf. Exod 21:10; *b. Baba Metzi'a* 59a; *b. Pesahim* 72b; *m. Ketub.* 4:4; 5:5; Rubenstein, "Marriage and the Family in Jewish Tradition," 11–12.

24 Stolper, "The Man-Woman Dynamic of Ha-Adam," 40.

25 Rambam, *Hilkhot Shabbat* 30:14, as quoted in Lichtenstein, "Of Marriage," 16.

26 Bronstein, "Theology and Ritual of Jewish Marriage Rites," 41.

Every Jewish wedding, therefore, implicitly looks forward to the final redemption. This eschatological pining is reflected in the fifth and seventh blessings of the *sheva berachot* – which frame the sixth blessing recalling the Garden of Eden. The fifth blessing invokes Isaiah's eschatological vision of the barren woman who will "exult and be glad as her children are joyfully gathered to her" (Isa 54:1), while the seventh recalls Jeremiah's longing for the future sounding of the "voice of joy and gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and voice of the bride" in the streets of Judah and Jerusalem (cf. Jer 33:11).

Concerning the eschatological trajectory of marriage, Rabbi Avraham Kook writes:

> The sexual inclination goes and pours forth toward the future, toward the perfect existence; it will bring a time when the existence of the world to come will be present in this world. For the future existence is filled with splendor and pleasantness.[27]

In summary, it seems that Jewish marriage – in both its liturgical celebration and praxis – has very much preserved the theological structure and meaning of our four key moments of salvation history. This vision presupposes that the nuptial covenant is not a mere human invention but is based on a universal, transcendent archetype that has been preserved in the sacred texts and collective religious memory of the Jewish religion. As Lichtenstein aptly states, marriage

> bears the stamp of a covenantal relationship – entered into between the parties, and with reference to the broader covenant between God and man, generally, and between the *Ribbono shel Olam* and *Keneset Yisrael*, particularly – within and through which twin goals [i.e. procreation and love/companionship] are interactively achieved.[28]

Although well aware of the contemporary challenges to this vision of marriage, Blu Greenberg affirms the enduring value of such a model, based on a timeless, transcendent paradigm:

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27 R. Avraham Yitshak ha-Kohen Kook, *Orot ha-Kodesh* (Jerusalem: Mosad ha-Rav Kook, 1963), 3:38; p. 299; as quoted in Lichtenstein, "Of Marriage," 27.

28 Lichtenstein, "Of Marriage," 10. Similarly, Chabad asserts: "It is in marriage that we most emulate G-d, creating life and eternalizing the temporal (by reproducing, man and woman not only create a child but also that child's potential to have children, and for his children to have children, ad infinitum). When two become one, they transcend the finite and the mortal, unleashing the single human faculty that is infinite and divine" (*A Guide to the Jewish Wedding*).

> Judaism . . . makes a strong case for traditional marriages: a long-term relationship characterized by love and the bonds of nurturing each other and children, and also bounded by traditional parameters of fidelity, mutual respect, and steadfastness . . . I believe a covenantal model works for human relationships . . . What does Judaism teach? That marriage is good, very good; that it is the Jewish way.[29]

8.3.2 *Marriage: A Feminist Critique*

The traditional Jewish vision of marriage stands in stark contrast to contemporary views of love and romantic unions. Indeed, in recent generations it has faced an onslaught of reproaches from feminist critics[30] who have accused it of promoting androcentrism, patriarchy, sexism, male supremacy, and even misogyny – resulting in a long history of control and oppression of women.

This reaction is not surprising. As we have seen, the Scriptural portrait of the divine-human marriage is anything but egalitarian: Despite some important exceptions,[31] the divinity usually plays the role of the dominating male figure, while the human protagonist (Israel, the Church, or the believer) plays the more passive, receptive part of the bride. Thus it is God, the husband, who sets the terms of the covenant and "calls the shots," so to speak, while the (human) bride is invited to an obedient response of faith and love.

This vision clearly clashes with the values of egalitarianism and inclusivism that are so highly prized in contemporary Western culture. Feminists obviously have no great love for the Talmudic view that the husband "acquires" his wife in the act of betrothal. And it is no secret that many streams of Judaism and Christianity have at times promoted quasi-gnostic views denigrating sexuality

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29 Greenberg, "Marriage in the Jewish Tradition," 20.

30 Although there are many types of feminism, it is not the place here to define and critique the specific differences between them. In the present section, I will call "feminism" or "secular feminism" the view that generally rejects divine revelation and salvation history as the foundation for marriage – even though some of its proponents may have a background in the Judeo-Christian tradition.

31 As we have seen, Wisdom literature and Philo are the two great exceptions that attribute a female role to the (quasi-)divine protagonist of the nuptial metaphor. Yet, as Trible notes, "feminine imagery for God is more prevalent in the Old Testament than we usually acknowledge." Some traditionally feminine activities attributed to God in the Hebrew Bible include that of providing food and drink (Exod 16:4–36; 17:1–7), of a seamstress who clothes her family (Neh 9:21), of having birth pangs and giving birth (Isa 42:14; 66:9) and of nursing her child (Isa 49:15). Trible, "Depatriarchalizing in Biblical Interpretation," 32–34.

and the body.[32] Even Greenberg, who praises the merits of traditional Jewish marriage, acknowledges that "much of the literature, law, and language surrounding marriage and divorce reflects hierarchy and sexism."[33]

Dissatisfaction with traditional forms of marriage – and their abuse – has led to a radical rethinking of the notions of marriage and romantic love in recent decades. Although we cannot enter here into the philosophical and theological currents of thought that paved the way for these new models, we may mention some of the main presuppositions and features that demarcate them from the traditional Jewish (and Christian) views of marriage – and from the model we have examined in the present study.[34]

First, proponents of the "new models" are deeply suspicious of any authority – whether human or divine – that would seek to assert its power over others. Consequently, they reject both the notion of a supernatural personal being who intervenes in human history and traditional sources of religious authority (such as creeds and scriptures).[35] Second, the rejection of an absolute divine authority results in the abandonment of universal transcendent archetypes in favor of an inward turn, where spiritual principles are fashioned "utilizing the human psyche's power to create flexible stories, symbols, myths, and images."[36] Thus the notion of God as objectively existent metaphysical reality gives way to largely subjective perceptions of the divine. Third, if the notion of a divinity survives at all, then "liberation from patriarchy" is imperative. This is achieved by replacing the traditional concept of God as father or bridegroom by female or at least gender-neutral deities. Fourth, the individual will is valued instead of suppressed. The notion of discovering and embracing a predetermined, divine purpose for marriage is supplanted by the "celebration of diversity," where one determines for oneself the concept of love that best fits one's own desires, thus reaching endless possibilities of self-actualization. Fifth, the linear notion of time that is typical of Judaism and Christianity tends to be rejected in favor of a circular, cyclic concept. Hence the very notion of

32 To cite just one example, Lichtenstein shows that Maimonides "evidently found no place for either love or companionship as the raison d'etre of marital sexuality." Lichtenstein, "Of Marriage," 17; cf. Hilkhot De'ot 3:2.

33 Greenberg, "Marriage in the Jewish Tradition," 4, 18.

34 The characteristics noted here are based on Grigg, *Gods after God*, 117–119. Even though Grigg is specifically describing the features of contemporary witchcraft, these are general enough that they apply to many contemporary secular feminist movements. See also Ruether, *Sexism and God Talk*; "Gender Equity and Christianity"; "Christianity and the Family"; "Feminist Theology."

35 Cf. Grigg, *Gods after God*, 127.

36 Grigg, *Gods after God*, 117.

salvation history, "according to which time starts with Eden, degenerates, and then moves under divine providence to some definite end-point of history," becomes largely irrelevant. Sixth, this means that bodily growth, decay and death are cyclic, natural, and not the product of some original sin. There is no need, therefore, to escape these realities or try to "fix" them; one should accept and embrace them as a normal part of human existence. Seventh, the very notion of original sin (and often of sin itself) is emphatically denied, and the concept of objective good and evil is blurred or relativized, so that there is no need to be "redeemed" from sin. Eighth, it follows that sexuality should not be "controlled and repressed but, instead, is allowed to follow its own internal regulatory processes."[37] This is the ethical backdrop for the "sexual revolution" that has dominated Western culture since the late 1960s. Ninth, sexual self-determination seeks to oust the two traditional moral imperatives of marriage, union and procreation, in favor of "reproductive choice," which translates into free access to contraception and abortion. Finally, the combination of the above factors results in a downplaying or rejection of the notions of complementarity between man and woman, and of a "gender hierarchy" inherent to the cosmic order that could promote androcentric views.[38]

In short, feminist notions of love and sexuality are generally built "not on notions of an external deity handed down by patriarchal ancestors, but upon the practice of following the leads of one's own spiritual dynamics and developing the images and fantasies that are part of one's own creative spiritual work."[39] This view presupposes – and rejects – a patriarchal notion of God as human projection of male, androcentric views and arbitrary power that is largely or entirely divorced from authentic, inherent goodness.

With its rejection of transcendence, of a linear notion of time, of original sin, of redemption, and of a divinely willed male-female complementarity, it goes without saying that the secular feminist view allows no room for a notion of marriage based on the perfect designs of a good God who reveals himself in human history, as seen in the present work. The goal is, rather, to free oneself

37 Grigg, *Gods after God*, 118–19.

38 As Phyllis Trible explains, "for feminists, that word [complementarity] signals danger. Rather than connoting equality, it signifies division between the sexes. It perpetuates stereotyping as it leads to the bondage of defined roles. Patriarchy and sexism themselves have ample room for complementarity; indeed, they promote it." Trible even finds the view of woman as the "crown of creation" problematic, for it "undercuts gender equality" and "places woman on a pedestal above man while at the same time subordinating her to serve his need for salvation" (Foreword by Phyllis Trible in Terrien, *Till the Heart Sings*, xv–xvi).

39 Grigg, *Gods after God*, 119.

from the shackles of the dominating patriarchal deity, so that one may freely determine the best way to achieve one's self-actualization and find happiness.

8.3.3 *"New Feminism" and "Theology of the Body": A Catholic View*

In recent decades, a "new feminism" has emerged as an alternative to the "secular feminism" outlined above. Largely inspired by the philosophical, theological and anthropological vision of Pope John Paul II, it is primarily Catholic in origin, though it also includes non-Catholic proponents.[40] In his 1995 encyclical *Evangelium Vitae*, the late pontiff invited women to

> promote a "new feminism" which rejects the temptation of imitating models of "male domination", in order to acknowledge and affirm the true genius of women in every aspect of the life of society, and overcome all discrimination, violence and exploitation.[41]

The new feminism shares with its secular counterpart the desire to promote the equality of women and fight against all forms of injustices against them. The two movements part ways, however, in their metaphysical and anthropological premises: Metaphysically, the new feminism adopts a position of "openness to God and revelation for understanding human beings." Anthropologically, it insists on affirming not just the equal dignity of men and women, made in the image and likeness of God, but also their "complementarity" and uniqueness. It thus rejects what it calls "ideological feminism" which "denies the fundamental psychic and spiritual distinctiveness of the sexes and which devalues motherhood and the nurturing role of women in the family and in society."[42]

For the new feminists, it is a foundational principle that (1) male and female are unique, but not identical. Other core principles include (2) marriage as

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40 Some of the contemporary proponents of the new feminism include Pia de Solenni, Mary Ann Glendon, Sister Prudence Allen, R.S.M., Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, Janet E. Smith, Alice von Hildebrand, Mary Beth Bonacci, Mary Ellen Bork and Johnnette Benkovic. Cf. Garcia-Cobb, "'New Feminism' Shines Light on True Genius of Women," accessed Oct 21, 2015.

41 John Paul II, Evangelium Vitae, 99. Other foundational writings by John Paul II include his series of lectures delivered between 1979 and 1984 that later became known as the *Theology of the Body* (John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them: A Theology of the Body*), his 1981 apostolic exhortation *Familiaris Consortio* ("On the Christian Family"), his 1988 apostolic letter *Mulieris Dignitatem* ("On the Dignity and Vocation of Women"), his 1994 "Letter to Families," and his 1995 "Letter to Women."

42 Garcia-Cobb, "'New Feminism' Shines Light on True Genius of Women," accessed Oct 21, 2015.

communion, i.e. "a sacred union that entails the self-giving of persons in free, total, faithful and fruitful communion;" (3) the celebration of the family and the home, which entails the challenge of balancing domestic and professional work for women, especially in the indispensable role of motherhood; (4) focus on love and service, not power and domination – in contrast to other forms of feminism that emphasize the struggle against "patriarchy"; and (5) freedom grounded in truth, for "the true exercise of freedom involves, not a reliance on purely subjective and changeable opinions, or one's selfish interest or whim, but on divinely revealed and unchangeable truths."[43]

On this last point, as Laura Garcia notes, two different views of freedom correspond to two different conceptions of happiness: The first is *freedom as autonomy* (literally, *auto-nomos*: "a law unto oneself"), which considers happiness to be "the fulfillment of one's desires, especially desires for wealth, comfort, and influence."[44] This freedom often rejects attempts to objectively assess these desires and tolerates no constraints or obstacles to fulfilling them. The second type is *freedom as the power to love*, which views happiness as the fulfillment of one's need to receive and give love by means of a sincere gift of self.[45] According to this view, marriage is not a mere human institution based on an arbitrary, androcentric will to dominate that is rooted in patriarchal cultural norms, but rather a deep mystery that is born in the heart of the God who is love.

Although this is not the place for a full treatment of John Paul II's "Theology of the Body," it is worth noting some of its salient points to consider how it is in continuity with the traditional Jewish view of marriage and the biblical view of nuptial symbolism at key moments of salvation history that has been the object of our study.

For John Paul II and the "new feminists", the essence of marriage and the family are rooted in the Trinitarian God, who is within Himself a "mystery of personal loving communion": "God created man in His own image and likeness: calling him to existence through love, He called him at the same time for love."[46] Hence "*the primordial model of the family is to be sought in God himself*, in the Trinitarian mystery of his life."[47] The divine "We" (cf. Gen 1:26) is

43 Garcia-Cobb, "'New Feminism' Shines Light on True Genius of Women."

44 Laura L. Garcia, "Authentic Freedom and Equality in Difference," in *Women, Sex & the Church: A Case for Catholic Teaching*, ed. Erika Bachiochi (Boston: Pauline Books & Media, 2010), 26.

45 Laura L. Garcia, "Authentic Freedom and Equality in Difference," 27.

46 John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio* 11.

47 John Paul II, "Letter to Families," 6 (emphasis in the original).

the "eternal pattern" of the human "we," especially the "we" that is "formed by the man and the woman created in the divine image and likeness." Since the human person is created "from the very beginning" as male and female, asserts the pontiff, "the life of all humanity… is marked by this primordial duality" from which derives "the 'masculinity' and the 'femininity' of individuals."[48]

From an initial situation of "original solitude," the first "Adam" (who represents both men and women), discovers that he is different from the animals in that he is endowed with the gift of freedom and called to love – God and neighbor. With the creation of Eve, Adam moves from the state of "original solitude" to a state of "original unity" in which man and woman, as "one flesh," become the image of God, "not so much in the moment of solitude as in the moment of communion."[49] This state of being "naked and unashamed" (Gen 2:25) is the key to John Paul's rich teaching on the "nuptial meaning of the body," whereby nuptial or spousal love – encompassing both body and soul – is understood as the mutual love of "total self-donation" which has the capacity to bring forth new life as it fulfills the commandment to "be fruitful and multiply" (Gen 1:28). The nuptial meaning of the body, therefore, is the body's "power to express love: precisely that love in which the human person becomes a gift and – through this gift – fulfills the very meaning of his being and existence."[50]

With the sin of Adam and Eve, however, the rupture of communion with the Creator leads to the breakdown of communion between man and woman. Human sexuality becomes tainted by shame and guilt. It is the "entrance of the fig leaves" into human history (cf. Gen 3:7), when "the union of man and woman becomes subject to tensions, their relations henceforth marked by lust and domination."[51] Later, God establishes a covenant with the people of Israel and gives them the Law of Moses, which regulates and limits the effects of sin on conjugal relations, by "protecting the wife from arbitrary domination by the husband."[52] Yet it is only with the Incarnation of Christ, the divine bridegroom, that husbands gain the capacity to love their wives "as Christ loved the Church and gave himself up for her" (Eph 5:25), and wives are able

48 John Paul II, "Letter to Families," 6. In the words of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (1604): "Since God created him man and woman, their mutual love becomes an image of the absolute and unfailing love with which God loves man. It is good, very good, in the Creator's eyes."

49 West, *Theology of the Body for Beginners*, 21–26.

50 John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them: A Theology of the Body* 15:1, as quoted in West, *Theology of the Body for Beginners*, 28.

51 *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 400; cf. also 1606–1608.

52 *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 1610.

to love their husbands in return with selfless devotion. Spouses are "the permanent reminder to the Church of what happened on the Cross,"[53] as they imitate Christ's self-sacrificial, redemptive, life-giving act by faithfully loving one another, and by remaining open to the gift of new life.[54] This constitutes the essence of their vocation to live as "temples of the Holy Spirit," by which marriage is healed and sanctified anew (cf. Eph 5:21–33) and restored to the divine image. In fact, "the entire Christian life bears the mark of the spousal love of Christ and the Church. Already Baptism, the entry into the People of God, is a nuptial mystery; it is so to speak the nuptial bath which precedes the wedding feast, the Eucharist."[55] The sacraments of baptism, marriage, and the Eucharist, in turn, anticipate the eschatological "marriage supper of the lamb" (Rev 19:7; 21:9) that will bring Christian marriage to its ultimate fulfillment. The Catholic "new feminist" view of marriage is thus based on a scriptural view of salvation history that "begins with the creation of man and woman in the image and likeness of God and concludes with a vision of 'the wedding-feast of the Lamb.'"[56] It remains in continuity with our model of nuptial symbolism at key moments of salvation history, going from Eden to the end of days.

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53 John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio* 13.

54 "Thus the couple, while giving themselves to one another, give not just themselves but also the reality of children, who are a living reflection of their love, a permanent sign of conjugal unity and a living and inseparable synthesis of their being a father and a mother," John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio* 14.

55 *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 1617.

56 *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 1602.

Appendices

A. Plants and Spices in Sirach 24: Intertextuality with Motifs of Salvation History

Sirach 24	Canticle/Love	Eden
cedar of Lebanon (κέδρος) אֶרֶז לְבָנוֹן	Beams of house are κέδροι (Cant 1:17); palanquin made of wood of Lebanon (3:9); beloved invites bride to come from Lebanon (4:8); fragrance of L. (4:11); beloved's countenance as κέδροι of L. (5:15); nose of beloved as tower of L. (7:4)	κέδροι besides waters (Num 24:6); אֲרָזִים in garden of God/Eden (Ezek 31:8)
cypress/fir on Hermon (κυπάρισσος) (πεύκινος)[a] ברוֹשׁ/ברות	rafters of בְּרוֹתִים/κυπάρισσοι (Cant 1:17); beloved coming from Hermon (4:8)	בְּרוֹשִׁים/κυπάρισσοι in garden of God/Eden (Ezek 31:8)
palm tree in En Gedi (φοῖνιξ) תָּמָר/תִּמֹּרָה/תְּמֹרִים	stature of beloved is like a תָּמָר/φοῖνιξ (Cant 7:8–9); lover is a cluster of henna in vineyards of En Gedi (1:14)	—
rose plants (φυτὰ ῥόδου) (ἄνθος ῥόδων)[b] (κρίνον = lily) חֲבַצֶּלֶת? שׁוֹשַׁנָּה? פֶּרַח? ורד?	the bride is a rose (חֲבַצֶּלֶת/ἄνθος) of Sharon (Cant 2:1); the ἄνθη appear on the earth (2:12); שׁוֹשַׁנָּה (Cant 2:1–2,16; 4:5; 5:13; 6:2–3; 7:2)	—
beautiful olive tree (ἐλαία/ἔλαιον) זַיִת	—	—
plane tree (πλάτανος) (ἐλάτη)[c] עַרְמוֹן	ἐλάτη (Cant 5:11)	Ezek 31:8 עַרְמוֹן in the garden of God/Eden

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Temple/Jerusalem	Eschaton
cedar of L. used to build temple (1 Kgs 5:6,8,10 (Gk 24); 6:9,15,18,36; 10:27); righteous will grow like a אֶרֶז בַּלְּבָנוֹן planted in house of the Lord (Ps 92:12–13)	אַרְזֵי לְבָנוֹן (Isa 14:8); L. will be fruitful field (Isa 29:17); glory of L. (Isa 35:2); κέδρος (Isa 41:19); the glory of L. (Isa 60:13); Israel will cast roots as L., smell will be as wine of L. (Hos 14:5–7)
שׁוּרִב/πεύκινος used to build temple (1 Kgs 5:8,10; 6:15,34; 2Chr 3:5)	בְּרוֹשִׁים (Isa 14:8); ברוֹשׁ/κυπάρισσος (Isa 41:19; 55:13); the ברוֹשׁ will beautify place of God's sanctuary (Isa 60:13); Ephraim will be like a green ברוֹשׁ (Hos 14:8)
תְּמֹרֹת/φοίνικες on doors of Temple (1 Kgs 6:29,32,35; Ezek 41:20,25); on carts of bronze (1 Kgs 7:36); righteous shall flourish like a תָּמָר/φοῖνιξ planted in house of the Lord (Ps 92:12–13)	תְּמֹרִים/φοίνικες in Ezekiel's eschat. Temple (Ezek 40:16,22,26,31,34,37; 41:18–20, 25–26)
flowers (פְּרָחִים/κρίνα) on menorah (Exod 25:31–34; 37:19); lily-work (מַעֲשֵׂה שׁוֹשָׁן) on top of pillars (1 Kgs 7:19,22); brim of molten sea (1 Kgs 7:26) and altar of brass (2 Chr 4:5) like flower of lily (פֶּרַח שׁוֹשַׁנָּה, פֶּרַח שׁוֹשָׁן)	ἄνθος will grow out of the root of Jesse (Isa 11:1); as the earth brings forth her ἄνθος God will raise praise among nations (Isa 61:11); Israel will blossom as the lily (Hos 14:5)
Olive oil to burn lamp (Exod 27:20, Lev 24:2); anointing oil (Exod 30:24); offered with sacrifices (Exod 29:2,40; Lev 2:1–7, 15–16); cherubims (1 Kgs 6:23); doors of sanctuary (1 Kgs 6:31–33); green olive tree in house of the Lord (Ps 52:8)	עֵץ שָׁמֶן (Isa 41:19); future beauty of Israel will be as olive tree (Hos 14:6)
—	Isa 41:19

(cont.)

Sirach 24	Canticle/Love	Eden
cassia/cinnamon (κιννάμωμον) קִנָּמוֹן	the bride's garden spiced with cinnamon (Cant 4:14); adulteress' bed (Prov 7:17)	Apoc. Mos. 29:3–6
camel's thorn (calamus?) (ἀσπάλαθος) קנה?	Calamus is one of the spices of the bride's garden (Cant 4:14)	Apoc. Mos. 29:3–6
aroma of spices (ἄρωμα)[d] (ἥδυσμα) בֹּשֶׂם	בֹּשֶׂם and/or ἄρωμα: (Cant 1:3; 4:10; 4:14,16; 5:1; 5:13; 6:2; 8:14) Esth 2:12 maids scented with ἄρωμα	—
choice myrrh (σμύρνα) מוֹר	(Cant 1:13; 3:6; 4:6; 4:14; 5:1; 5:5; 5:13) bride's garments scented with myrrh (Ps 45:8); adulteress' bed (Prov 7:17); maids scented with myrrh oil (Esth 2:12)	—
galbanum (χαλβάνη) חֶלְבְּנָה	—	Jub. 3:27–28
onycha (ὄνυξ) שְׁחֵלֶת	—	—
stacte (στακτή) נָטָף, לט	—	Jub. 3:27–28
frankincense (λίβανος) לְבֹנָה	(Cant 3:6; 4:6; 4:14)	Jub. 3:27–28

[a] κυπάρισσος (cypress or fir tree) is usually the translation of ברות/ברוש (e.g. Isa 41:19; 55:13; Ezek 31:8). However ברוש is also translated πεύκινος in the LXX to describe the wood used to build the temple (e.g. 1 Kgs 5:8 [MT 5:22]; 6:15).
[b] Sir 24:17; 39:14; 50:8.

Temple/Jerusalem	Eschaton
used in anointing oil of tabernacle (Exod 30:23); κιννάμωμον (קִנָּה) offered with sacrifices (Jer 6:20)	—
קִנָּה/κάλαμος used in anointing oil of tabernacle (Exod 30:23); קִנָּה offered with sacrifices (Jer 6:20)	—
בֹּשֶׂם/ὄδυσμα used for anointing oil (Exod 30:23;35:28); (1 Chr 9:29–30)	—
myrrh used for anointing oil of tabernacle (Exod 30:23)	—
חֶלְבְּנָה/χαλβάνη used to make incense for tabernacle (Exod 30:34)	—
שְׁחֵלֶת/ὄνυξ used to make incense for tabernacle (Exod 30:34)	—
נָטָף/στακτὴ used to make incense for tabernacle (Exod 30:34)	—
הַלְּבֹנָה/λίβανος used to make incense for tabernacle (Exod 30:34); offered w/sacrifices (Lev 2:1–2,15–16; Jer 6:20)	gentiles will bring לְבֹנָה/λίβανος to God (Isa 60:6)

[c] The only other occurrence of πλάτανος in the LXX is found in Gen 30:37 which is a translation from the Hebrew עַרְמוֹן. עַרְמוֹן also appears in Ezek 31:8, which the LXX renders as ἐλάτη (pine tree). ἐλάτη appears in LXX Cant 5:11.

[d] בֹּשֶׂם is translated as either ἄρωμα (e.g. 1Chr 9:29–30; 2Chr 9:1, 9) or ὄδυσμα (e.g. Exod 30:23; 1 Kgs 10:2, 10, 25).

B. Precious Metals and Stones Related to Wisdom, Love, Eden, Temple, and Eschaton

Metal or stone	Wisdom	Love/Song of Songs
Gold (פָּז, חָרוּץ, כֶּתֶם, זָהָב)	Ps 19:10; 119:72; Job 28:15,16,19; Prov 3:14; 8:10,19; 16:16; 20:15	Ezek 16:13; Ps 45:9,13; Cant 1:10–11; 3:10; 5:11,14,15; Sir 7:19
Silver (כֶּסֶף)	Ps 12:6; 119:72; Job 28:15; Prov 2:4; 3:14; 8:10,19; 16:16	Ezek 16:3; Cant 1:11; 3:10; 8:9,11
Bdellium (בְּדֹלַח)	—	—
Onyx (שֹׁהַם)	Job 28:16	—
Sapphire (סַפִּיר)	Job 28:6,16	Cant 5:14
Glass (זְכוֹכִית)	Job 28:17	—
Coral (רָאמוֹת)	Job 28:18	—
Crystal (גָּבִישׁ)	Job 28:18	—
Rubies/pearls (פְּנִינִים)	Job 28:18; Prov 3:15; 8:11; 20:15	Prov 31:10
Topaz (פִּטְדַת)	Job 28:19	—
Beryl (תַּרְשִׁישׁ)	—	Cant 5:14
Turquoise/Emerald (נֹפֶךְ)	—	—
Emerald/carbuncle (בָּרֶקֶת) (chalcedony?)	—	—
Sardius (אֹדֶם)	—	—
Diamond (יָהֲלֹם)	—	—
Jasper (יָשְׁפֵה)	—	—

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Eden	Tabernacle/Temple	Eschaton/Heaven
Gen 2:11–12; Ezek 28:13	Exod 25:11–13, 17–18, 24–39; Exod 28; 1Ki 6:20–35; 7:48–51; Sir 45:9–12	Isa 13:12; 60:6,9,17; Dan 10:5; Zech 4:2; 13:9; Mal 3:3; Rev 21:18,21
—	Exod 26:19,21,25; 27:10,11,17; 38:10–12; 1 Kgs 10:25–29;	Isa 60:9,17; Zech 13:9; Mal 3:3
Gen 2:12	—	—
Gen 2:12; Ezek 28:13	Exod 25:7; 28:9,20; 35:9,27; 39:6,13; 1 Chr 29:2;	—
Ezek 28:13	Exod 28:18; 39:11	Isa 54:11; Ezek 1:26; 10:1; Rev 21:19
—	—	Rev 21:18,21
—	—	—
—	—	Isa 54:12; Rev 21:11, 22:1
—	—	Rev 21:21
Ezek 28:13	Exod 28:17; 39:10	Rev 21:20
Ezek 28:13	Exod 28:20; 39:13	Ezek 1:16; 10:9; Dan 10:7; Rev 21:20
Ezek 28:13	Exod 28:18; 39:11	Rev 21:19
Ezek 28:13	Exod 28:17; 39:10	Rev 21:19
Ezek 28:13	Exod 28:17; 39:10	Rev 21:20
Ezek 28:13	Exod 28:18; 39:11	—
Ezek 28:13	Exod 28:20; 39:13	Rev 21:19

C. Intertextuality of Genesis 1–2, Exodus 25–31, Sirach 24, and Sirach 50

The Days of Creation, the Building of the Tabernacle, Wisdom and the High Priest[a]

	Gen 1–2: Seven Days of Creation	**Exod 25–31: Seven Speeches on Building of Tabernacle**
Day 1	Heavens and earth; darkness over deep; spirit hovering over waters; creation of light; evening and morning (Gen 1:1–5)	Tabernacle (heavens & earth); menorah, tamid sacrifice and incense offering (evening and morning) (Exod 25:1–30:10)
Day 2	Separation of upper and lower waters (1:6–8)	Separation of Israel into two age groups, one of which must pay the half-shekel tax (30:11–16)
Day 3	Separation of dry land and sea (1:9–10); Vegetation (1:11–12)	Bronze laver (the 'sea') (30:17–21)
Day 4	Sun, moon and stars (1:14–19)	Sacred anointing oil: myrrh, calamus, cinnamon, cassia; anointing of cultic instruments & priests (30:22–33)
Day 5	Living creatures in upper and lower realms (1:20–23)	Sacred incense: stacte, onycha, galbanum, frankincense (30:34–38)
Day 6	Land creatures and humankind (God's image) (1:24–27)	Bezalel filled with God's spirit (31:1–11)

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Sir 24: Lady Wisdom	Sir 50: The High Priest
Comes from mouth of God; covers earth like mist; dwells in high places; throne is pillar of cloud (24:3–4)	Repaired house and fortified Temple (50:1)
Made circuit of the vault of heaven; walked in depths of the abyss (24:5)	Laid foundations of height (ὕψος) of double (waters?), high ἀνάλημμα of temple enclosure (50:2)
Has part in waves of the sea, in whole earth (24:6); like cedar, cypress, palm tree, rose plants, olive tree (24:13–14)	In his days a cistern for water was dug, a reservoir like sea in circumference (50:3). Like roses, lilies by spring of water, green shoot, olive tree, cypress, young cedar, palm trees (50:8,10,12).
Like cassia, camel's thorn (calamus), choice myrrh (24:15a)	High priest is glorious coming out of sanctuary; like morning star among clouds, full moon, sun shining on temple; rainbow in glorious clouds (50:5–7)
Like galbanum, onycha, stacte, frankincense in tabernacle (24:15b)	Like fire and incense in the censer, vessel of hammered gold adorned with precious stones; (50:9–10)
Wisdom finds resting place in Israel, dwelling in Tabernacle/Zion/ Jerusalem (24:7–11);	Puts on garments of glory & beauty; goes up to holy altar, makes court of sanctuary glorious; receives portions from hands of priests; surrounded by sons of Aaron in splendor with Lord's offering in their hands before congregation of Israel. (50:11–13)

The Days of Creation (cont.)

	Gen 1–2: Seven Days of Creation	**Exod 25–31: Seven Speeches on Building of Tabernacle**
Day 7	Creation finished; Sabbath rest; God blesses 7th day (2:1–3)	Sabbath; God finished speaking (31:12–17); Moses blesses the people (39:43)
Disruption/ Sin	Sin brings shame, curse on work, banishment from Eden (3:1–24)	Golden calf breaks covenant, brings death in camp (32:1–35)

[a] Based on Fletcher-Louis, "The Cosmology of P and Theological Anthropology in the Wisdom of Jesus Ben Sira."

Sir 24: Lady Wisdom	Sir 50: The High Priest
Wisdom's banquet offers immortality; freedom from sin, shame, and curse of work; restoration of God's image (24:19–22); Wisdom/Torah = Tree of Life; overflowing like 4 rivers of Eden (24:23–33)	Finishes service at altars & arranging offering; pours wine libation at foot of altar; sons of Aaron shout & sound trumpets for memorial; people worship God; singers praise him, until order of worship is ended; Simon blesses people. (50:14–21)

D. The 7 Days of the Sinai Theophany: Targum and Fourth Gospel

Day	Targum Pseudo-Jonathan
1	In the third month of the Exodus of the sons of Israel from the land of Mizraim, **on that day, the first of the month**, they came to the **desert** . . . and had come to the desert of Sinai and Israel encamped there in the desert, of one heart, near the mountain. (Exod 19:1–2)
2	And Moses on the **second day** went up to the summit of the mount; and the Lord called to him from the mount, saying, This shalt thou speak to the men of the house of Jakob, and instruct the house of Israel. Ye have seen what I did to the Egyptians; and how I bare you upon the clouds as upon eagles' wings . . . and from thence have brought you nigh, to (**receive) the doctrine of My law**. And now, if you will truly hearken to My Word and keep My covenant, you shall be more beloved before Me than all the peoples on the face of the earth. And before Me you shall be **crowned kings, and sanctified priests, and a holy people** . . . And all the people responded together, and said, All that the Lord hath spoken we will do. And **Moses carried back the words of the people before the Lord**. (Exod 19:3–8)
3	And the Lord said to Moses on the **third day**: I will reveal Myself to thee in the depth of the cloud of glory, that the people may hear while I speak with thee, and may believe in thee forever. And Moses delivered the words of the people before the Lord. (Exod 19:9)
4	And the Lord said to Moses on the **fourth day**, Go unto the people, and prepare them today and tomorrow; let them wash their raiment, and be prepared **On the third day**; for **on the third day** the Lord will reveal Himself to the eyes of all the people, upon the Mount of Sinai. And thou shalt set limits for the people that they may stand round about the mountain, and shalt say, Beware that you ascend not the mount, nor come near its confines; whoever cometh nigh the mount will be surely put to death. Touch it not with the hand; for he will be stoned with hailstone, or be pierced with arrows of fire; whether beast or man, he will not live. But when the voice of the trumpet is heard, they may go up (forwards) towards the mount. And Moses went down that day to the people, and prepared the people, and they blanched their clothes. And he said to the people, Be ready for the **third day**; abstain from the **marriage-bed**. (Exod 19:10–15)

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John 1–2

Now this is the testimony of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, "Who are you?" He confessed, and did not deny, but confessed, "I am not the Christ." . . . He said: "I am 'The voice of one crying in the **wilderness**: "Make straight the way of the LORD,"' as the prophet Isaiah said." . . . (1:21–23)

The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!. . . And John bore witness, saying, "I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and He remained upon Him. "I did not know Him, but He who sent me to baptize with water said to me, 'Upon whom you see the Spirit descending, and remaining on Him, this is **He who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.**' "**And I have seen and testified that this is the Son of God.**" (1:29–34)

Again, **the next day**, John stood with two of his disciples. 36 And looking at Jesus as He walked, he said, "Behold the Lamb of God!" 37 The two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus . . . 40 One of the two . . . was Andrew . . . 41 He first found his own brother Simon, and said to him, "We have found the Messiah" . . . (1:35–41)

43 **The following day** Jesus wanted to go to Galilee, and He found Philip and said to him, "Follow Me." . . . 45 Philip found Nathanael and said to him, "We have found Him of whom Moses in the law, and also the prophets, wrote – Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." . . . 47 Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward Him, and said of him, "Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no deceit!" 48 Nathanael said to Him, "How do You know me?" Jesus answered and said to him, "Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you." 49 Nathanael answered and said to Him, "Rabbi, You are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!" 50 Jesus answered and said to him, "Because I said to you, 'I saw you under the fig tree,' do you believe? You will see greater things than these." 51 And He said to him, "Most assuredly, I say to you, hereafter you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man." (1:35–51)

(cont.)

Day	Targum Pseudo-Jonathan
7 (3rd day)	And it was **on the third day . . .** that on the mountain there were voices of thunders, and lightnings, and mighty clouds of smoke, and a voice of a trumpet exceeding loud; and all the people in the camp trembled. And Moses brought forth the people from the camp to meet the **glorious Presence of the Lord**; and suddenly the Lord of the world uprooted the mountain, and lifted it in the air, and it became luminous as a beacon, and they stood beneath the mountain. And all the mount of Sinai was in flame; for the heavens had overspread it, and He was revealed over it in flaming fire, and the smoke went up as the smoke of a furnace, and all the mountain quaked greatly. And the voice of the trumpet went forth, and grew stronger: (then) Moses spoke, and was answered from before the Lord with a gracious and majestic voice, and with pleasant and gracious words. And **the Lord revealed Himself** on mount Sinai upon the summit of the mountain, and the Lord called unto Moses from the summit of the mount, and Moses went up. (Exod 19:16–20)

John 1–2

On the **third day** there was a **wedding** in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there.
Now both Jesus and His disciples were invited to the wedding.
3 And when they ran out of wine, the mother of Jesus said to Him, "They have no wine."
4 Jesus said to her, "Woman, what does your concern have to do with Me? My hour has not yet come." 5 His mother said to the servants, "Whatever He says to you, do it." . . .

11 This beginning of signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, and manifested His glory; and His disciples believed in Him. (2:2–11)

E. Nuptial Symbolism in Pseudepigraphal and Apocryphal Texts

	Joseph & Aseneth	Odes of Solomon	Fourth Ezra	Shepherd of Hermas	2 Clement
Origin:	Jewish	Jewish-Christian	Jewish	Christian	Christian
Date:	100 BCE–100 CE	30–150 CE	~100 CE	100–160 CE	130–160 CE
Genre:	Midrashic allegory	Hymn book	Apocalypse	visions/ mandates/ parables	Homily
Nuptial Protagonists:	Joseph & Aseneth	Jesus & believer	Zion = woman (God = husband?)	Church = woman believer & virgins	Christ & Church
Nuptial Symbolism:	Mystical/ Allegorical (= Israel & nations)	Mystical	"Ecclesial" (Israel)	Ecclesial/ mystical	Ecclesial
Historical Aspect:					
Protological moment	Aseneth's court as paradise; honeycomb from paradise	Believer "becomes" Paradise	Creation/ Adam/Eden	Pre-existent Church	Pre-existent Church Quot. of Gen 1:27
Redemptive moment	Union of Jos. w/ Asen. = impart. of etern. life	Messiah's incarnation & crucifixion	Sinai	Christ = font of salvation	Christ's salvation
Mystical moment	Sacred meal; heavenly bridal chamber = temple	Sacred kiss giving living waters; bridal chamber	Son of woman = Temple	Union with virgins = impart. of virtues	Union of flesh & spirit = Church & Christ
Eschatological hope	Allegory of future conversion of pagan nations?	Hope of immortality	Glorious eternal city	Eschat. Church = pure glorious virgin	Hope of personal and general judgment

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